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**Conflicts Within the Established  
Church in Warwickshire,  
c. 1603-1642**

**Two Volumes: Volume One**

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## **Abstract of Thesis**

This thesis examines the established church in Warwickshire from the accession of James I to the outbreak of the English civil war. Its principal aim is to assess the impact of the ecclesiastical policies of Charles I, which have been the subject of considerable debate between historians in recent years.

The thesis argues that significant changes occurred in the local church during the 1630s. These were broadly in line with the policies of Archbishop William Laud, who sought to promote an institutional and sacramental style of worship, and to suppress the activity of Protestant nonconformists. In Warwickshire, these policies led to the promotion of ceremonial religion and the renovation and redecoration of parish churches. There was also an increase in the prosecution of Puritans in the church courts. However, the success of these policies was limited by various factors: the attitudes of the local bishops, the practical problems of enforcing discipline, and the resilience of the Puritan community.

The thesis examines the impact of Laud's policies on the county as a whole, and on particular groups within the local church. It also presents case-studies of religion in the towns of Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon. The thesis concludes that the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s were largely counter-productive: they provoked the hostility of local Puritans, but failed to curb their activities. The experience of "Laudianism" also encouraged demands for thorough reform in the established church, which were translated into support for parliament at the beginning of the civil war.

## Introduction: Religious Conflict before the English Civil War

"Princes lose the hearts of their Subjects when they are perswaded not to use them graciously ... Nothing can cast a sure knot upon the conscience of the Subject but the true knowledge and feare of God. So when Princes advance the good of God's house, they establish the good of their owne."

John Burges, 1604 <sup>1</sup>

Writing in the second year of the English civil war, Thomas Spencer, a parliamentary minister from Warwickshire, offered a confident explanation for the "giddy and unstable times" in which he lived. The war was a Catholic plot. It had been instigated by the Jesuits, who sought to destroy the True Church and subject the people of England to the tyranny of Antichrist. The royalists were papists: they cried "the King, the King", but they meant "the Pope, the Pope".<sup>2</sup> This version of events was disputed by one of Spencer's Warwickshire contemporaries, the royalist gentleman, Sir William Dugdale. To Dugdale, the war was an attempt by fanatical Puritans to undermine the government of the Kingdom. It had been fomented by seditious preachers, who had been "sent abroad throughout all England to poyson the People with their Antimonarchical Principles".<sup>3</sup>

Despite their different interpretations, Spencer and Dugdale had no doubt that the civil war was a religious conflict. They both traced its origins to the religious divisions which had existed in England since the Reformation, and which had intensified during the reign of

Charles I. Their perspective was shared by the majority of participants on both sides. This fact has led many historians to emphasise the importance of religion in the outbreak of the civil war. John Morrill has argued that the upheavals of the 1640s represented "the last and greatest of Europe's wars of religion".<sup>4</sup> More recently, Richard Cust and Ann Hughes have written that "it is hard to conceive ... of a broad military struggle against a monarch who was regarded as a defender of the true Protestant religion".<sup>5</sup>

However, while the majority of historians accept that religious divisions played a major role in the civil war, there is little agreement about the causes of these divisions in the decades before 1642. The debate has concentrated on the reign of Charles I, and the influence of his Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. To some historians, Charles and Laud were responsible for provoking fears of a Catholic plot to suppress the Protestant faith, unleashing the surge of "anti-papery" which precipitated the civil war. According to Robert Ashton, Archbishop Laud was "the one person to whose policies and actions the fall of the Stuart monarchy can be attributed".<sup>6</sup> Patrick Collinson has described him as "the greatest calamity ever visited upon the Church of England".<sup>7</sup> Against this, Peter White has asserted that the religious policies of the Caroline period were essentially moderate, and designed to preserve the "peace of the church".<sup>8</sup> This position has been endorsed in articles by Kevin Sharpe and G. W. Bernard.<sup>9</sup>

The first section of this chapter reviews the current debate about the causes of religious instability in the early Stuart period. It



argues that many of the questions raised in this debate can only be answered by examining the impact of the crown's religious policies at a local level, from the accession of James I to the outbreak of the civil war. The second section sets out the reasons for choosing the county of Warwickshire as the subject for a study of this kind. It argues that the county was broadly representative of England as a whole, and therefore provides a valuable insight into the origins of religious conflict during the reign of Charles I. This section concludes by outlining the structure of the rest of the dissertation.

#### 1) The Debate

The present controversy about the causes of religious instability in early Stuart England dates from 1973, when Nicholas Tyacke published his influential essay, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution".<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, Tyacke developed his thesis in Anti-Calvinists (1987), a full-scale history of "the rise of English Arminianism".<sup>11</sup> Tyacke argues that the Jacobean Church of England was dominated by the theology of Calvinism. Above all, this meant the doctrine of "predestination". Predestination holds that God ordains all individuals to either salvation or damnation: the "elect" are selected from the mass of the "reprobate", irrespective of their merits or their participation in the sacraments. To Tyacke, this doctrine was "a common and ameliorating bond" between the different factions of the church. It allowed conformist divines to agree with moderate Puritans about the "fundamentals of religion", while they

differed over more superficial questions about the ceremonies of the church.<sup>12</sup>

According to Tyacke, this theological consensus was shattered during the reign of Charles I. Charles favoured the novel opinions of a small party of "Arminian" churchmen, led by William Laud, who rejected the doctrine of predestination. Instead, the Arminians argued that it was possible for individuals to resist the Grace of God, and emphasised the role of the sacraments in bringing about salvation. Following his elevation to Canterbury in 1633, Laud suppressed the teaching of predestination and effectively re-defined its adherents as "Puritans". He introduced unpopular innovations in church services, promoting sacramental worship at the expense of preaching. This new policy was combined with the ruthless enforcement of conformity through the ecclesiastical courts. These actions destabilised the established church and provoked a Puritan backlash in the early 1640s, which amounted to a Calvinist "counter-revolution".

Tyacke's model of the "Arminian takeover" of the Caroline church has been employed by several historians to explain the religious origins of the civil war. For example, Conrad Russell has argued that the Arminians were responsible for the atmosphere of anti-Catholic paranoia which led parliamentarians to equate episcopacy with "popery" in 1642.<sup>13</sup> According to Patrick Collinson, "the unexpected provocation of Arminianism" transformed the religious situation in England during the 1630s. This re-defined the Puritan movement "as

a reactive and broadly based platform of opposition which ... carried the revolution of 1640-1 and swept on into the war of 1642".<sup>14</sup>

But other historians have challenged Tyacke's account. The earliest critique was published by Peter White in 1984. White's article, "The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered", dismisses the claim that Calvinism was the dominant theology of the Church of England before the accession of Charles I. White points out that Archbishop Whitgift expressed doubts about the doctrine of predestination during the reign of Elizabeth: Whitgift believed that it was "a matter disputable and wherein learned men do and may dispute without impiety". This view was endorsed by his successor, Richard Bancroft, under James I. Moreover, the theological opinions of Archbishop Laud and his supporters were never explicitly stated. Laud's only recorded comment about predestination was that it was a mystery "unmasterable in this life".<sup>15</sup>

According to White, Laud was not interested in imposing any particular theology on the Church of England. Rather, he sought to suppress the discussion of difficult topics such as predestination in order to prevent divisive debates arising within the church. This interpretation has been supported by Kevin Sharpe, who argues that Laud was even-handed in his enforcement of censorship, and regarded "peace and unity" as his overriding priority.<sup>16</sup> G. W. Bernard has developed this thesis in his essay, "The Church of England, 1529-1642" (1990). Bernard asserts that both Elizabeth and James pursued a policy of suppressing theological disputes, since they threatened to undermine the authority of the "monarchical church". This policy

was faithfully maintained by Charles and Laud: "Laud eschewed controversy, prevented the public discussion of thorny matters, and so fitted into a long tradition of monarchical religion".<sup>17</sup>

To those historians who reject the idea of an "Arminian" takeover of the Church of England, there was nothing revolutionary in the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s. Julian Davies has argued in his D.Phil thesis, "The Growth and Implementation of 'Laudianism', with Special Reference to the Southern Province" (1987), that the policies associated with Laud's regime were not part of a concerted campaign to reform the established church, but simply the actions of individual bishops, acting independently in their own dioceses. Moreover, these policies in themselves were relatively modest and unprovocative.<sup>18</sup> Adopting a slightly different approach, G. W. Bernard has argued that there was nothing exceptional about the religious situation in Caroline England: Laud's policies may have created tensions in the established church, but these were not significantly greater than those of the 1560s or early 1600s.<sup>19</sup>

Thus far, the debate between Tyacke and his critics has concentrated mainly on theological issues. However, this approach has failed to produce conclusive evidence for either side. This is largely because of the lack of relevant sources. It is generally accepted that Laud and his party were extremely reluctant to commit themselves to doctrinal positions, particularly on the central question of predestination. To the opponents of Tyacke's thesis, this reticence suggests that they were genuinely indifferent about such matters. Against this, Tyacke's supporters assert that the apparent reserve of

the Arminians merely concealed their hostility towards Calvinism. For example, Peter Lake has argued that Arminians "had no need to impose an alternative orthodoxy themselves, they had merely to silence their opponents".<sup>40</sup> Since both of these arguments are compatible with the available evidence, it is unlikely that the dispute can be resolved in favour of either side.

By focusing on questions of doctrine, both Tyacke and his critics have directed attention away from the actual impact of Laud's policies on the established church. Both sides have also concentrated on national sources at the expense of local records. As a result, comparatively little has been written about the Laudian regime in a practical context. This problem has been emphasised by Andrew Foster in his essay, "Church Policies of the 1630s" (1989). Foster argues that the debate about the Caroline church can only be resolved through regional research, such as his own work on the influence of Archbishop Richard Neile in the diocese of York. Ideally, this research should cover the whole early Stuart period, so that the ecclesiastical situation under James I can be compared with the "Arminian" settlement established by his son.<sup>41</sup>

This is the approach adopted in this thesis, which examines the established church in Warwickshire from the accession of James I to the beginning of the civil war. By concentrating on a single region over this period, it is possible to assess the extent to which new policies were introduced in the church in the 1630s, and to determine whether these policies represented a significant break with the past. Were "innovations" introduced in the services of the local church?

Was ecclesiastical discipline enforced with greater strictness? How far were the policies of the 1630s determined by the national leaders of the church, or were they simply the initiatives of local bishops?

As well as explaining the implementation of Laudian policies, this approach reveals the impact of these policies on different groups within the local church. In particular, it demonstrates the effect of the Laudian regime on the Puritan community, which was well established in Warwickshire before the 1630s. Did local Puritans regard the Church of England under Laud as uniquely corrupt? If they did, was this because of the imposition of "Arminian" theology, or the practical effects of the Archbishop's policies? In what ways, if any, did the experience of Laudianism encourage the emergence of radical Puritanism during the 1630s, and the demand for a "thorough" reform of the established church after 1640?

It should be stated, of course, that the religious situation in Warwickshire may not have been typical of the country as a whole. As many historians have pointed out, the condition of the established church varied considerably from region to region, according to the size and resources of the seventeenth-century dioceses. This fact, together with the differing attitudes and personal qualities of the bishops, means that no particular region can be regarded as perfectly representative. However, the experience of Warwickshire was significant for several reasons, which are set out in the next section.

## 2) Religion in Warwickshire

The social and religious situation in seventeenth-century Warwickshire was extremely varied. The north-west of the county contained the towns of Birmingham and Coventry, among the largest centres of urban population outside London. These towns were centres of the iron-smelting and textile industries respectively, with connections throughout the kingdom. In the south, the smaller communities of Warwick and Stratford served as important market towns. The rest of the county was predominantly agricultural, with approximately two-thirds of the population living in rural parishes. These were divided between the forest region of "Arden", north of the river Avon, and the more open, "fielden" region in the south. This economic diversity was combined with an unusual pattern of ecclesiastical administration. The north of the county, including Coventry and Birmingham, formed the archdeaconry of Coventry in the huge diocese of Lichfield. The southern third the county, including Stratford and Warwick, was in the diocese of Worcester. A handful of parishes south of Stratford came under the bishop of Gloucester.

This complex situation makes Warwickshire a promising subject for a study of the ecclesiastical policies of the early Stuart period. As most of the county was divided between two dioceses, it is possible to compare the attitudes and actions of their respective bishops, and to determine their personal role in the implementation of national policies. In addition, the economic diversity of the region allows for an examination of the established church in a variety of

different situations. The religious life of the major towns can be compared with that of the rural parishes, and the impact of ecclesiastical policies can be assessed in the context of these different communities.

Under James I, there was no consistent pattern in the policies of the bishops responsible for Warwickshire.<sup>22</sup> This was most evident in the diocese of Lichfield. The King appointed George Abbot to the diocese in 1609, and promoted him to Canterbury two years later. Abbot was replaced by Richard Neile, a churchman closely associated with the "Arminian" movement.<sup>23</sup> Following his translation to Durham in 1614, Neile was succeeded by another "Arminian", John Overall.<sup>24</sup> However, Overall was replaced in 1618 by Thomas Morton, a divine with distinctly Low Church sympathies, who remained in the diocese until 1632.<sup>25</sup> James appointed two bishops to the diocese of Worcester. The first, Henry Parry, was an uncontroversial figure, greatly respected by the King for his learning and eloquent sermons.<sup>26</sup> Parry held the diocese from 1610 until 1616, when he was succeeded by John Thornborough, a Low Churchman, whose episcopate continued until his death in 1641.<sup>27</sup>

There was only one new episcopal appointment in the region during the reign of Charles I. In 1632 the Bishop of Bristol, Robert Wright, was translated to Lichfield. Wright was promoted on the direction of William Laud, who was impressed by his management of his previous diocese. This fact, together with the records of Wright's visitations at Lichfield, suggest that he was committed to the ecclesiastical policies of the Caroline period. However, there is also evidence that



Wright was pragmatic in his implementation of "Arminian" reforms. He was reluctant to impose new policies in areas where they threatened to provoke serious resistance, and he was prepared, on occasions, to compromise on the introduction of Laudian "innovations".<sup>29</sup> Wright's pragmatic approach was combined with a degree of personal negligence, which caused him to be reproached by his superiors during the 1630s.<sup>30</sup>

John Thornborough, the Bishop of Worcester during the Caroline period, was a very different man. It appears that Thornborough was personally unsympathetic to many of the ecclesiastical policies promoted during the 1630s, particularly the attempt to restrict the availability of preaching in his diocese. This was demonstrated by a bitter dispute between the bishop and the dean of Worcester, Simon Potter, who sought to suppress the Puritan lectureships in Worcester after 1635.<sup>31</sup> In Warwickshire, Thornborough's episcopate was characterised by his generally lenient approach towards the nonconformist clergy. However, despite his personal sentiments, the bishop was prepared to acquiesce in the implementation of certain Laudian policies. For example, he presided over the conversion of communion tables into "altars" in the parishes of Warwickshire during the 1630s.<sup>32</sup>

Clearly, neither Wright or Thornborough can be regarded as a zealous supporter of the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s. But both men were prepared to implement these policies in Warwickshire, albeit in a rather pragmatic and limited fashion. In this they may well have been typical of the majority of English bishops. Robert Wright, a

committed Laudian who tempered his support for "Arminian" reforms with a spirit of pragmatism and compromise, was probably more representative than men such as Richard Neile and Matthew Wren, who enforced the Laudian programme with greater energy and inflexibility. Similarly, a man such as John Thornborough, who had little personal sympathy for the Laudian regime but was reluctant to make a serious stand against it, was more typical than a dissident such as Bishop Williams of Lincoln, who flatly refused to introduce Laudian policies in his diocese.

While the bishops responsible for Warwickshire can be regarded as broadly representative of the English episcopacy under Charles I, the county itself contained an interesting cross-section of religious opinions. Warwickshire was a centre of the Puritan movement during the Elizabethan period. This tradition continued into the reign of James I. Coventry and Birmingham were centres of Puritan preaching in the early decades of the seventeenth century, with "godly" lecturers attracting large congregations from the surrounding countryside. In the south of the region, similar lectureships flourished in Warwick and Stratford. Outside these urban areas, the Puritan laity was served by a network of "godly" ministers, who constituted approximately a fifth of the parish clergy.<sup>32</sup> Thus there was a deep-rooted and highly organised Puritan community in Warwickshire before the accession of Charles I.

The success of the Puritan movement in Jacobean Warwickshire provoked a hostile reaction from certain members of the clergy. This was particularly evident in the major towns, where ecclesiastical

patronage was controlled by the crown, and the activity of "godly" lecturers threatened to undermine the position of the beneficed clergy. The most valuable livings in Coventry and Warwick were held by outspoken anti-Puritans during the reign of James I. Other anti-Puritan divines, such as Francis Holyoake of Southam, also rose to prominence during this period. These men can be regarded as early advocates of "Laudian" policies: indeed, many of them went on to support the reforms introduced in the church during the 1630s. The existence of Puritan and anti-Puritan factions in Warwickshire before the reign of Charles I makes it possible to assess the impact of the King's religious policies on these two groups.

Another characteristic of early Stuart Warwickshire was the considerable extent to which the county was influenced by national events. Ann Hughes has emphasised this fact in her study of the region, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987). Hughes shows that the majority of the local gentry were connected by marriage with families living outside the area, and were therefore able to receive regular news from other parts of England. These connections were reinforced by friendships with other families, and members of the clergy, residing in neighbouring counties. In the case of the professional and mercantile classes, the need to maintain working contacts with London also extended the flow of information in and out of the region.<sup>33</sup>

At a lower level, churchwardens' accounts reveal how ordinary people in the region took an active interest in national and international developments. The parishioners of Kenilworth, Southam and Offchurch

made contributions towards the repair of St Paul's in London during the 1630s.<sup>34</sup> In the same period, three other parishes sent donations towards "the reliefe and maintenance of the distressed Ministers of the Palatinate".<sup>35</sup> On several occasions, churchwardens' accounts record the ringing of church bells to celebrate a welcome piece of news. In 1623, for example, the bells rang at Southam to mark the safe return of Prince Charles from his abortive attempt to negotiate a marriage treaty with Spain.<sup>36</sup> In 1626 the bells rang in the parish church of St Nicholas in Warwick "when good newes was brought from the Parliament". They rang again in 1641 to celebrate the passing of the Act to establish triennial parliaments.<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, Warwickshire was far from isolated from the political and religious situation in the rest of England. It is reasonable to assume that many people in the region interpreted the religious policies of the early Stuart period in the context of national, and even European events. This was certainly the case in 1640-1642, when the advocates of ecclesiastical reform in the county framed their objections to the established church in both regional and national terms.<sup>38</sup> The experience of Warwickshire can thus help to illustrate the relationship between national and local issues in creating an atmosphere of religious confrontation during the reign of Charles I.

The situation in Warwickshire also provides a valuable insight into the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the civil war. The county took a prominent role in the campaign for political and religious reform in the early years of the Long Parliament.

Following the final break between the King and parliament, it was one of the first areas to respond to the call to arms from both sides. Musters for the royalist and parliamentary forces took place in the region in May 1642; and there were skirmishes between the rival militias in the following months. In July 1642 Coventry closed its gates to the King's army, becoming one of the first municipalities to declare its allegiance to parliament. Two months later, the first major battle of the civil war was fought at Edge Hill, in the south-west corner of the county.

There can be little doubt that religion was a critical factor in the outbreak of the civil war in Warwickshire. This was particularly evident on the parliamentary side. The local leaders of the parliamentary army in 1642 were drawn mainly from the Puritan gentry.<sup>39</sup> The most active of their number, Lord Brooke, was later described by Clarendon as a "positive enemy of the whole fabric of the church".<sup>40</sup> On the other side, it appears that many of those who supported the King were driven as much by their fear of religious extremism as by their loyalty to the crown.<sup>41</sup> By studying the religious situation in Warwickshire between 1603 and 1642 it should be possible to discover the origins of these religious divisions, and the ways in which the experience of the Laudian church influenced the partisans in the civil war.

The first four chapters of this thesis examine the established church in the region from the accession of James I to the meeting of the Short Parliament. Chapter One assesses the general condition of the church: the structure of ecclesiastical authority, the quality of the

clergy, and the economic condition of the parishes. Chapter Two traces the policies of the bishops, and demonstrates a shift in episcopal priorities during the reign of Charles I. This involved a greater emphasis on the sacramental aspects of religion, and a renewed interest in the upkeep and decoration of parish churches. This was combined with a sustained attempt to suppress nonconformity during the 1630s.

Chapters Three and Four concentrate on the divisions within the lower clergy. Chapter Three focuses on the county's Puritan ministers. It argues that the defining characteristic of these ministers was their idea of the church as a community of believers, united by the personal experience of God's Grace, rather than an institution based on external acts of worship. This chapter examines the influence of the Puritan clergy in the region, and describes the ways in which they were affected by the reforms of the 1630s. Chapter Four identifies another, smaller group of ministers who can be defined as "anti-Puritans" or "High Churchmen". This group was distinguished by its emphasis on the church as an institution, based above all on the observance of external rites. Naturally, the High Church clergy welcomed the ecclesiastical policies of the Caroline period.

The next two chapters examine the religious opinions of the Protestant laity. Chapter Five concentrates on the gentry. Again, the main emphasis is on the division between individuals with "Puritan" and "High Church" sympathies, and the ways in which the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s affected the members of each

group. Chapter Six surveys the religious opinions of the laity as a whole. It considers the evidence of popular support for Puritan, anti-Puritan and "High Church" ideas. More generally, it attempts to assess the attitudes of the laity towards the established church in the early Stuart period.

Chapters Seven and Eight are case-studies of religious life in Coventry and Stratford respectively. These studies cover the period from 1603 to the outbreak of the civil war. Once more, the main focus is on the division between the Puritan community and supporters of a "High Church" style of religion. In Coventry, the activity of the Puritan community provoked hostility from the town's beneficed clergy throughout the early Stuart period. In Stratford, there was a long-running conflict between the town corporation, the Puritan minister of Holy Trinity, and an aggressively anti-Puritan faction within his congregation. Each chapter examines the conflict between these groups, and assesses the impact of Laudian policies on the situation during the 1630s.

Chapter Nine concentrates on events in Warwickshire between 1640 and 1642. It traces the role of religion in these events, and considers its importance in determining the allegiance of parliamentarians and royalists at the outbreak of the civil war. This chapter demonstrates that the active supporters of parliament in 1642 were mainly members of the Puritan community, who were convinced of the need for a "thorough reformation" of the established church by their experience of Laudian policies in the preceding decade. The King's supporters were driven less by religious ideals, though they were

alarmed by the religious radicalism of the parliamentarians. The thesis ends with a brief conclusion. This sets out its main findings, and their relevance to the wider debate about the causes of religious instability in early Stuart England.



## Chapter One: The Established Church in Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"Order is a Sacred thing. Law is the work of God."

Robert Harris, 1642<sup>1</sup>

The organisation of the established church in seventeenth-century Warwickshire was unusually complex. The county itself was not an ecclesiastical unit. The north of the region made up the archdeaconry of Coventry in the diocese of Lichfield, while most of the south, including Warwick itself, formed part of the diocese of Worcester. A small pocket of parishes in the south-west came under the Bishop of Gloucester. Warwickshire was divided into 210 parishes, approximately two-thirds of which belonged to the archdeaconry of Coventry. These parishes varied considerably in size, wealth and economic character. They ranged from small rural communities to market towns and major urban centres, such as Coventry and Birmingham.

This chapter presents a general assessment of the structure and condition of the local church in the early Stuart period. The first section examines patronage and ecclesiastical authority in the county. In particular, it examines the system of visitations and church courts, and evaluates the effectiveness of this system in enforcing episcopal policies in the region. It argues that the

authority of the crown and the bishops was severely limited in many important areas. The second section examines the condition of the Warwickshire parishes. It assesses the financial situation of the parish clergy, and the standard of the ministry that they provided; it also discusses the possessions and physical condition of parish churches. This section argues that the provision of the established church varied markedly across the county, depending largely on the circumstances of particular benefices.

#### 1) Ecclesiastical Authority

During the Reformation, the rights of ecclesiastical patronage in Warwickshire were divided between local families and the crown, with only a small number of livings remaining in the gift of ecclesiastical patrons. By 1600, the great majority of parishes were held by local families. In the third of the county which belonged to the diocese of Worcester, 45 parishes were held by laymen, and another two by the corporation of Warwick. The crown enjoyed the rights to six parishes, while the Bishop of Worcester held three. The remaining eight livings were divided between the rector of Hampton-Lucy and some of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. A similar situation prevailed in the archdeaconry of Coventry. Here the crown was the patron of 27 parishes. A handful of livings were divided between the Bishop of Lichfield and the Universities. This left over a hundred benefices in the gift of local families.

Clearly, the authority of the crown and the bishops was limited by their inability to nominate clergy to the great majority of Warwickshire livings. To a certain extent, this weakness was offset by the fact that the rights of patronage in the county were divided between a large number of families, with no single layman holding more than four parishes. This meant that the crown was the largest single patron in the region. Moreover, the livings controlled by the crown were among the wealthiest and most important in the county. The King was the patron of both parishes in Coventry, the area's most populous town. He also presented clergy to the most valuable living in Warwick, as well as the important market towns of Stratford and Nuneaton.

However, even in those parishes where the crown or the bishop enjoyed patronage, it was frequently difficult for them to exercise their authority. Throughout the early Stuart period, the corporations of Coventry, Warwick and Stratford attempted to extend their own rights in the local church. In 1631, for example, the burgesses of Warwick attempted to secure the vicarage of Chadsley for the town's lecturer, Thomas Spencer, against the wishes of the Bishop of Worcester. The matter was resolved in 1636, when the bishop obtained an order from the Lord Keeper to impose his preferred candidate.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the corporation of Stratford attempted to present the Oxfordshire minister, Robert Harris, to the parish of Stratford in 1638. This led to a protracted legal dispute, which caused the living to remain vacant until the King imposed his own candidate in 1640.<sup>3</sup>

The influence of the crown was further undermined by the employment of independent lecturers, or "assistant ministers", by the town corporations. Lectureships were established in Coventry in 1610 and Warwick in 1611, and a lecturer was employed by the magistrates of Stratford in the 1620s.<sup>4</sup> In each of these towns, the lectureships were maintained throughout the reign of Charles I. In other parishes, lectureships were set up by members of the local gentry. In 1625 the Jennens family of Birmingham pledged £10 per annum towards a weekly sermon in the town, which was performed by the ministers of the surrounding area.<sup>5</sup> Contemporary accounts suggest that a similar arrangement was in place at Nuneaton in the 1630s, although its origins are uncertain.<sup>6</sup>

In effect, the lectureships created an independent system of patronage in those parishes where the crown controlled the appointment of the beneficed clergy. This was particularly important to the Puritan movement. Throughout the 1620s and 1630s, the magistrates of Coventry and Warwick employed Puritan churchmen as "assistants" to the ministers presented by the King. This was possible despite the occasionally spirited resistance of the beneficed clergy themselves. In 1633, for example, the vicar of St Mary's in Warwick managed to eject his nonconformist "assistant", Samuel Clarke, by threatening to present him to the High Commission. However, the corporation replaced the ousted lecturer with another Puritan, Thomas Spencer.<sup>7</sup> As well as providing patronage for the "godly" clergy, the lectureships played an important role in the organisation of the Puritan movement as a whole. This role is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Clearly, it was extremely difficult for the crown to influence the religious life of Warwickshire through the appointment of clergy. However, the bishops were able to regulate the affairs of the local church through the system of "visitations" and ecclesiastical courts. This system operated in essentially the same way across the county. The Bishop of Lichfield held a "consistory court" at Coventry, and the Bishop of Worcester convened an equivalent tribunal at Worcester. These institutions were empowered to enforce standards of moral and religious behaviour in their respective areas, and could also be used to supervise the condition of parish churches. At a lower level, the archdeacon of Coventry presided over his own court at Coventry, and the archdeacon of Worcester held a court at Alcester. Generally, the most important cases were handled in the consistory courts, while the archdeacons' courts dealt with less serious matters.

All of these bodies relied for information on the reports of local church officers. Two churchwardens were elected annually in every parish, where their responsibilities included the maintenance of the church and its possessions, the collection of levies, and the oversight of religious and moral behaviour. Every year they were required to send details of any offences committed in their parish to their archdeacon. This would generally result in the offenders being summoned to the archdeacon's court, where they could be sentenced to perform penances in their own parish. In certain parishes, the archdeacon's authority was superseded by that of the minister, who was entitled to preside over his own court. "Peculiar" jurisdictions of this kind were enjoyed by the ministers of six Warwickshire parishes, including the large parish of Stratford.<sup>23</sup>

The supervision of the archdeacons was reinforced by the bishops' own "visitations". One year in every three the bishops of both dioceses published articles of enquiry to be answered by every parish under their jurisdiction. These articles covered standards of moral behaviour, forms of worship, the possessions of churches, and the maintenance of church property. Ministers and churchwardens were required to assemble at regional venues to make depositions based on the articles. Ministers, lecturers and schoolmasters were also required to present their letters of orders, preaching licences, and other appropriate documents for inspection. The representatives of the Warwickshire parishes in the diocese of Lichfield usually convened at Coventry, and those from Worcester at Worcester. Proceedings arising from the visitations were generally dealt with in the respective consistory courts.

The bishops themselves were responsible for framing the articles of enquiry in their visitations. In practice, the articles from both Lichfield and Worcester were essentially the same throughout the period 1603-1639. Their ecclesiastical specifications were based largely on the canons of 1604. Since the articles covered a wide range of subjects, it was impossible in practice for parish churchwardens to ensure that every one of them was maintained, and the bishops tended to focus attention on particular aspects at different times. Thus Bishop Overall of Lichfield made a drive to ensure that the county's churches were adequately provided with ceremonial artefacts in 1617. His successor, Thomas Morton, appears to have placed particular emphasis on the maintenance of churchyards in 1620. In the 1630s greater attention was paid to nonconformity,

the defence of ecclesiastical rights, and the repair of church buildings.<sup>9</sup>

The bishops had some means to ensure that their orders were carried out. Churchwardens were required to send certificates to the courts that the penances imposed on individuals had been performed. They were also obliged to certify that repairs or alterations to churches had been completed. If necessary, this system could be backed up by visits to parishes by diocesan officials. Such visits were not widely employed in either of the county's main dioceses before 1635, though they were conducted in the Warwickshire parish of Welford-upon-Avon, in the diocese of Gloucester, in 1617 and 1626.<sup>10</sup> After 1635, inspections by diocesan officials became relatively widespread throughout the county, mostly to view repairs to churches which had been ordered in episcopal visitations.<sup>11</sup>

In some respects, the system of ecclesiastical supervision was effective. The account books of the region's churchwardens, which have been preserved in thirteen parishes, demonstrate that the archdeacons' visitations were widely respected. Without exception, the churchwardens in these parishes recorded annual expenses for delivering presentments to the archdeacon's court.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the surviving records of the episcopal visitations in the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester reveal that these occasions were well attended. On the whole, the presentments to the bishops provided reasonably detailed information, particularly with regard to the moral behaviour of parishioners, and the condition of church buildings.

It is also clear that the diocesan authorities were able to exert considerable influence in the administration of the Warwickshire parishes. At one level, they supervised alterations in parish churches. This was particularly important with regard to church seating. The bishops made orders affecting the arrangement of pews in at least eight Warwickshire parishes between 1614 and 1639.<sup>13</sup> At another level, the courts were able to resolve disputes between the clergy and their parishioners. During the 1630s, the consistory court of Lichfield dealt with at least 30 cases of this kind in the archdeaconry of Coventry, mostly involving the payment of tithes and levies.<sup>14</sup>

More generally, the system of ecclesiastical justice played an important role in the society of Stuart Warwickshire. The articles enforced in the visitations touched on every aspect of social life. The laws on sexual morality affected family relationships, and the injunctions on matters such as church attendance, keeping the Sabbath, and refraining from drunkenness and blasphemy, attempted to regulate the leisure activity of the population. The impact of the disciplinary procedure was enhanced by the fact that much of it took place in public, and at the level of the communities in which the offences were committed. Citations and sentences were announced from the pulpit. Penances, in which the convicted person recited a statement of repentance for his or her transgressions, were performed openly during Sunday services.

It is clear that a large number of Warwickshire people came into contact with the church courts during the early Stuart period. Over



300 people in the archdeaconry of Coventry were reported to the visitation of the diocese of Lichfield in 1617. In the course of the same year, 136 people from Warwickshire were named in the visitation act book of the diocese of Worcester.<sup>15</sup> The influence of the courts was felt throughout the region: between 1617 and 1620, over two-thirds of the parishes in the county presented at least one person to the consistory court at Lichfield or Worcester.<sup>16</sup> These figures demonstrate that a significant section of the population was affected by the visitations, either directly or through their families and acquaintances.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of ecclesiastical discipline depended on the co-operation of the ministers and churchwardens in the parishes. In general, the presentments to the visitations reflected the interests of the local officers who made them. This meant that the system was reasonably effective at enforcing standards of moral behaviour, which were generally accepted in the communities to which these officers belonged. In effect, the parishes employed the courts to enforce their own standards of morality, which generally coincided with the articles of visitation.<sup>17</sup> However, the system was less effective as an instrument for imposing religious policies from above, or regulating the behaviour of the clergy themselves.

This problem was particularly acute in Warwickshire, where the division of the county between two dioceses meant that it was relatively isolated from the centres of episcopal supervision. Lichfield was one of the largest dioceses in England: in addition to Warwickshire, it encompassed the counties of Staffordshire,

Shropshire and Derbyshire. The practical difficulties of administration over such a large area meant that the Bishops of Lichfield were hard pressed to oversee the archdeaconry of Coventry. Similar problems confronted the Bishops of Worcester, though their area of jurisdiction was smaller. As a result, the authorities in both dioceses relied heavily on the co-operation of the parishes to enforce their authority in the region.

That co-operation was not always forthcoming. This problem was particularly important when the authorities attempted to enforce religious uniformity. In 1616 the Bishop of Worcester proceeded against the churchwardens of Hasely for refusing to present parishioners who had received the communion standing.<sup>19</sup> On other occasions, it appears that churchwardens concealed nonconformists by making no presentments at all. This probably occurred in the parish of Weddington, which made no presentments to the visitations of Lichfield in 1635 and 1639, but where the minister was well known for his Puritan sympathies.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, the system itself makes it extremely difficult to assess the extent of abuses of this kind.

The problems of enforcing conformity were compounded in the "peculiar" parishes, which enjoyed a degree of independence from diocesan supervision. The autonomy of peculiar jurisdictions varied according to local custom. At Stratford, the authority of the minister's court was superseded by the Bishop of Worcester during his visitations, although the Bishop's influence tended to be limited in practice. As a consequence, the town was a centre of Puritan dissent throughout the early Stuart period.<sup>21</sup> The difficulty of

maintaining discipline in the peculiar parishes was acknowledged by Bishop Wright of Lichfield in 1633: he informed Archbishop Laud "that the Peculiars of his Diocese (wherein he hath no Power) are much out of order".<sup>21</sup>

Once an offence was identified, the authorities were confronted with different problems in the next stage of the disciplinary procedure. In the majority of cases, the process was relatively simple: offenders would be cited before the appropriate court and there, if they appeared and pleaded guilty, they would be sentenced to perform a penance in their own parish. Failure to attend the hearing could result in excommunication. However, a more complex process was set in train when the accused man or woman denied the allegations against them. This involved a series of depositions from witnesses on both sides, together with possible appeals to the higher courts. Once undertaken, proceedings of this kind could drag on for several years.

The weaknesses of the disciplinary process were most apparent when it was used against the clergy. When a negligent or nonconformist minister was presented to the courts, he would usually admit his offence and promise to amend his behaviour. However, the limits of the system of supervision made it difficult for the authorities to oversee his subsequent conduct, and it was relatively easy for him to renege on his commitment. If he was presented again, and prosecuted in the consistory court, he could delay the proceedings for years by denying the articles against him. In the majority of cases, this

approach allowed the ministers concerned to retain their livings over lengthy periods.

This process can be illustrated by several examples. During the episcopal visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1620, the ministers of Leamington Hastings and Sowe were presented for absenting themselves from their cures.<sup>22</sup> The minister of Leamington Hastings, Thomas Lever, was prosecuted for the same offence in the consistory court in 1632.<sup>23</sup> Despite this, he retained his living until he was deprived by parliament after the civil war.<sup>24</sup> The minister of Sowe, George Dale, held his benefice until 1642, despite repeated entanglements with the diocesan courts.<sup>25</sup> In another instance, the vicar of Allesley survived repeated presentments for negligence and immorality over a period of twenty years, culminating in his prosecution in the High Commission in 1638. The case against him was still proceeding when he died two years later.<sup>26</sup>

The problems of disciplining the clergy were particularly acute in cases of nonconformity. This can be illustrated by the the career of Ralph Sherrat, the minister of Arley in the archdeaconry of Coventry. Sherrat was presented to the episcopal visitation in 1614 for neglecting to read the catechism; he was reported again three years later for refusing to wear the surplice, performing uncanonical baptisms, and failing to bid holy days.<sup>27</sup> It appears that no action was taken against him on either occasion. Eventually, Sherrat was prosecuted for nonconformity in the consistory court, but it was not until 1628 that he was deprived of his benefice.<sup>28</sup> The disciplinary procedure was no more efficient in the 1630s. At least seven

ministers were reported for nonconformity between 1635 and 1636. Of these, all but ~~two~~ remained in their parishes until the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>29</sup>

The difficulties of dealing with the nonconformist clergy were exacerbated by the pattern of ecclesiastical patronage in Warwickshire. Even when a minister was removed, it was usually impossible for the authorities to ensure that his replacement was more satisfactory. For example, Bishop Thornborough of Worcester succeeded in removing the nonconformist vicar of Wroxall, Ephraim Huitt, in 1639, but Huitt was succeeded by another Puritan, William Cooke, the future chaplain to the Earl of Essex.<sup>30</sup> At best, the role of the diocesan courts was confined to disciplining the existing clergy. In the face of a determined patron, there was little that the bishops could do to root out nonconformity in any particular parish.

Clearly, the system of diocesan visitations and courts was severely limited as a tool for enforcing discipline in the Warwickshire church. During the 1630s, Archbishop Laud attempted to reinforce this system by directly asserting his own authority in the region. The most important manifestation of this policy was the "metropolitan" visitation in 1635. This was conducted by the vicar-general, Nathaniel Brent, who convened the ministers and churchwardens of the region at Coventry, Stratford and Warwick. Brent's visitation had wider authority than those of the bishops, most notably in the "peculiar" parishes. It also had the effect of increasing the general level of supervision in the area, since an

episcopal visitation of the diocese of Lichfield was conducted in the following year.

The surviving records of Brent's inspection of the archdeaconry of Coventry reveal that he compiled an impressive body of information, which was at least comparable to the bishop's own visitations in 1636 and 1639. His jurisdiction over the "peculiars" led to the prosecution of Thomas Wilson, the nonconformist minister of Stratford.<sup>31</sup> However, it is doubtful whether the metropolitan visitation was significantly more efficient than its episcopal equivalents. It proceeded in the same way as they did, and therefore suffered from the same limitations. Moreover, most of the offenders that it exposed had to be dealt with through the existing disciplinary system, with its familiar weaknesses in dealing with determined nonconformists.

One solution to this problem was the revival of the court of High Commission, which had authority over every parish in the province of Canterbury. This dealt with cases from at least thirteen Warwickshire parishes in the period 1635-1640. The details of many of these cases are unknown, but prosecutions for nonconformity were definitely brought against inhabitants of Stratford, Brinklow and Birmingham. The course of these prosecutions make it clear that the High Commission suffered from the same delays as the diocesan courts. High Commission proceedings began against Thomas Wilson, the minister of Stratford, in 1635, and were still under way when he died three years later.<sup>32</sup> Proceedings began against lay nonconformists in Brinklow and Birmingham in 1637 and 1638

respectively, but neither case was concluded by the end of 1640, when the Archbishop's court was indefinitely suspended by parliament.<sup>33</sup>

## 2) The Parishes of Warwickshire

Clearly, the most important representatives of the established church in Stuart Warwickshire were the parish clergy. The circumstances of the clergy, and the quality of their ministry, varied considerably across the region. The most important factor affecting the position of the clergy was the size of their income, and the way in which it was allocated. This varied substantially from benefice to benefice. Since the majority of clerical income derived from parish tithes, the financial situation of the clergy depended largely on the population of their parishes, and their rights to the tithe. In the majority of cases, these rights had been established during the Reformation, and were fixed throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.

Approximately half the benefices in Warwickshire were rectories, in which all the tithes were paid directly to the minister. Tithes for arable produce were generally paid in kind, while those for livestock were often partially or completely commuted to cash. Fifty parishes were vicarages, in which the tithe was divided between the minister and lay impropriators. About another twenty parishes were perpetual curacies, in which all the tithes were collected by laymen, who employed curates on a fixed stipend.<sup>34</sup> The financial rights of the clergy in the vicarages varied from parish to parish. In the

majority of cases, certain tithes were paid directly to the incumbent and others to the impropriator, according to local custom. The practice was different in the parishes of Coventry, Warwick and Stratford, where the bulk of the tithes was received by the town corporations, who were obliged by their charters to pay the clergy a fixed maintenance.

Naturally, the system of impropriations led to the exploitation of the clergy in certain parishes. The ministers worst affected were the holders of perpetual curacies, whose stipends were frequently inadequate. For example, the curates of Hatton received only £6 per annum throughout the Stuart period; the curates of Sherbourne were paid an annual stipend of only £11.<sup>35</sup> During the metropolitan visitation in 1635, the churchwardens of Shottington complained that their curate received a stipend of £5 from the impropriator of the parish, although the annual tithes were worth £26. As a result, they claimed it was impossible to provide an adequate minister for the village.<sup>36</sup>

The difficulties of the clergy who were endowed with stipends were exacerbated by the fact that their income was fixed at the level of the original impropriations, despite the impact of rising prices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This meant that their financial position was progressively eroded. The impact of inflation was devastating in small, poorly endowed curacies such as Hatton and Sherbourne: neither of these parishes was able to support a minister by the end of the seventeenth century. Equally, inflation affected the occupants of the large, relatively wealthy vicarages which were



maintained by the town corporations. Consequently, the occupants of these benefices were frequently involved in financial disputes with the magistrates of their respective towns.

A typical dispute arose in Warwick in 1631, when the vicar of St Mary's, Thomas Hall, refused an offer by the corporation to increase his annual maintenance by £10, and threatened to initiate legal proceedings to secure a more generous settlement. The aldermen responded by reducing Hall's existing stipend from £50 to the minimum sum of £20 required by the town charter. Eventually, Hall accepted the original offer, together with a one-off "gift" of £10. In return, he promised "not to make any further demaund of Increase dureinge ... his continuance in the viccaradge".<sup>37</sup> In 1636 Richard Roe, the incumbent of the town's other parish of St Nicholas, was involved in a similar confrontation with the council. In this case, the dispute appears to have been resolved in the minister's favour, following a petition from the local gentry for a "good increase" in his annual income.<sup>38</sup>

Similar disputes took place between the clergy of Coventry and their paymasters in the early Stuart period. In 1636 the vicar of St Michael's, William Panting, secured an increase in his annual stipend to a total of £100 for a period of three years. However, by 1638 the two sides were embroiled in legal proceedings over the allocation of the tithe; these proceedings continued until Panting's departure in 1641.<sup>39</sup> At Stratford, a series of financial disagreements undermined the relationship between the town council and the minister of Holy Trinity, Thomas Wilson, in the 1620s and 1630s. Again, this dispute

led to litigation, which was still proceeding when Wilson died in 1638.<sup>40</sup>

The majority of the Warwickshire clergy, who received tithes directly from their parishioners, were faced with different problems. In the vicarages, the most valuable tithes were generally paid to the lay impropriator, although the precise allocation varied according to local custom. In certain cases, this could lead to financial hardship for ministers whose tithing rights were limited, particularly in rural parishes with small populations. In general, the clergy who held rectories were in a better position, since they were entitled to the whole of the tithe. However, their financial security also depended on the size of their parish, and the affluence of its inhabitants, which varied considerably throughout the region.

In all parishes, it appears that the collection of tithes was a difficult and controversial process, which frequently provoked conflict between the clergy and their congregations. This can be illustrated by the records of the ecclesiastical courts. Between 1614 and 1639, a total of 19 parishes reported parishioners to the episcopal visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry for withholding their dues to the church. The clergy of another 12 parishes brought suits in the consistory court of Lichfield concerning the payment of tithes and parish levies.<sup>41</sup> These figures show that financial disputes arose in a quarter of the parishes in the archdeaconry of Coventry in the early Stuart period. The number of disputes was probably even higher, since many would have been resolved without

recourse to the courts, and the surviving records of the courts are incomplete.

As well as their income from tithes, the majority of the Warwickshire clergy were endowed with glebe lands. Usually, they leased part of these lands to their parishioners, and farmed the remainder themselves. Again, the extent of the glebes varied markedly from benefice to benefice. For example, the rectory of Barford was endowed with an extensive farm, while the neighbouring vicarage of Long Compton held no land at all. In general, the value of the glebes increased more quickly than the income derived from tithes. This meant that those parishes with extensive glebes tended to retain their overall value better than those without them: for example, the income of the living at Barford increased from £11 in 1535 to £100 in 1714, while that of Long Compton only increased from £12 to £26 in the same period.<sup>42</sup> Inevitably, this factor increased the inequality between the parishes in the course of the seventeenth century.

It is clear from all this that the financial position of the Warwickshire clergy depended largely on the disparate circumstances of their benefices. The variations in income which arose from this situation were reflected in the quality of the clergy themselves. In many poorly endowed livings, it proved impossible to attract an adequate minister. At Shottington, for example, the church services were read by a weaver named Gregory Drakeford throughout the 1630s.<sup>43</sup> In contrast, the relatively prosperous livings in the county's major towns, and the best endowed of the rural parishes,

were generally occupied by well-qualified and able churchmen in the early Stuart period.

Despite these variations, there was a general improvement in the standard of the parish clergy during the early Stuart period. In 1585 Edmund Freke, the Bishop of Worcester, required the ministers in his diocese to describe their qualifications, and to state whether or not they were preachers. Of the 39 Warwickshire ministers who replied, only 13 stated that they were graduates, or had at least spent some time at University. Only 12 claimed to be preachers, though the vicars of Loxley and Wellesbourne said that they would begin to preach when they obtained licences. The ministers of another three parishes claimed that they used their authority to "admonishe & exhorte" their parishioners.<sup>44</sup> Assuming this sample is representative, it indicates that only a third of the parishes in south Warwickshire were served by educated, preaching ministers during the 1580s. The situation was probably similar in the rest of the county.

The provision of qualified clergy in the region improved markedly in the first half of the seventeenth century. Between 1620 and 1640, 71 new ministers were ordained in Warwickshire parishes in the diocese of Worcester. Of these, roughly two-thirds were either graduates or had attended University.<sup>45</sup> This trend was probably repeated across the county as a whole, and reflected the general increase in the number of educated clergy in England.<sup>46</sup> Presumably, many of the graduate ministers preached in their parishes, though this cannot be demonstrated from surviving sources. Thus a large part of the local

population had access to an educated, preaching minister by the reign of Charles I.

The availability of preaching was increased further by the practice of the clergy preaching outside their own parishes, which was well established by the first half of the seventeenth century. The practice was recorded in the surviving account books of the region's parishes. Of the twelve account books which have been preserved from the reign of James I, six recorded "visits" from travelling preachers.<sup>47</sup> In the parish of St Nicholas in Warwick, the arrival of "strange preachers" was so common that the churchwardens purchased a book to record their names in 1613.<sup>48</sup> The existence of the town lectureships, which were described in section one, also increased the availability of sermons in the region.

However, while the established church was able to provide a reasonable level of ministry in Warwickshire, it suffered from serious weaknesses. In a minority of parishes, the clergy were either negligent or "scandalous". The problem of unworthy ministers was widely acknowledged by contemporary observers. In 1610 Francis Holyoake, the High Church rector of Southam, condemned those ministers whose "carelesnesse and idlenes is such that ... they will take no pains".<sup>49</sup> Holyoake's complaint was echoed and amplified by the members of the Puritan community, who missed no opportunity to denounce the abuses of the "scandalous" clergy. Their attitude was summed up by John Trapp, the schoolmaster of Stratford, in 1641: Trapp asserted that "unsavoury salt is hardly fit for the dunghill, nor a wicked Minister for any place but Hell".<sup>50</sup>

It is possible to assess the prevalence of "wicked ministers" by examining the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry. Between 1614 and 1639, the churchwardens of at least 15 parishes presented their ministers for neglecting their duties or conducting themselves in an immoral fashion.<sup>51</sup> Another 6 cases were recorded in surviving papers of the consistory court.<sup>52</sup> This means that at least 15% of the parishes in the archdeaconry were occupied by a negligent or "unworthy" minister at some stage in the early Stuart period. It is probable that this figure under-estimates the extent of the problem, since the records are incomplete, and many offences would have escaped the attention of the authorities. A more accurate figure might be closer to 20%.

The most common allegation against the clergy was that they failed to perform services in their cures. Of the recorded abuses in the archdeaconry of Coventry, 14 involved the failure of ministers to provide communion, Prayers or sermons. This problem was often caused by the practice of pluralism, which affected about 10% of parishes in the archdeaconry. Ministers were frequently accused of absenting themselves from their parishes for lengthy periods because of commitments to other livings. This was the case in three of the surviving cases from the consistory court.<sup>53</sup> In one of these, the vicar of Leamington Hastings admitted to abandoning his cure for three months in the winter of 1631-2, without making any provision for the reading of services in his absence.<sup>54</sup>

A small number of ministers were also accused of immoral and irreligious behaviour. One of the most colourful examples was Jeremy

Morrell, the curate of Cubbington, who appeared in the consistory court in 1626. It was alleged that Morrell had engaged in an unseemly feud with the other members of his family: he had uttered "ungodly and irreligious" words against his parents, and had threatened to shoot his brother-in-law with a pistol.<sup>55</sup> The incumbents of at least three other Warwickshire livings were accused of drunkenness in the 1620s and 1630s.<sup>56</sup> The most notorious of these was William Warde, the vicar of Allesley. According to his accusers, Warde was frequently drunk when he attempted to perform services. On one lamentable occasion, his intoxicated condition meant that he was unable to complete a funeral service, "but he did reel and stagger, and was like to have fallen into the grave".<sup>57</sup>

It is clear that the activity of the "scandalous" clergy harmed the established church in Warwickshire. At one level, it undermined respect for the church in those parishes served by "wicked ministers". At another, "scandalous" clergy damaged the reputation of the ministry as a whole, since their excesses were reported widely outside their own communities. According to Sir William Dugdale, the debauched behaviour of the vicar of Shustocke in the 1620s meant that his parish "was far and neere reported a Lawlesse-Church".<sup>58</sup> This tendency was encouraged by Puritan preachers, who tended to exaggerate the extent of the abuses of the clergy to support their own demands for a "godly" preaching ministry.

There was little the ecclesiastical authorities could do to remedy the problem of the "scandalous" clergy. The practice of pluralism, which led ministers to neglect or abandon their cures, usually arose from

the under-endowment of the parishes concerned. This meant that the clergy were unable to support themselves on the income from only one living. Equally, the poorest parishes were unable to attract well-qualified and diligent ministers. These weaknesses were deep-rooted, and could only be addressed through a fundamental revision of the system of impropriations. However, such radical reforms were effectively beyond the scope of the bishops, even if they were inclined to undertake them. As a result, the influence of the authorities was confined to disciplining the "scandalous" clergy through the courts. This was a time-consuming and largely ineffective process, as was demonstrated in section one.

Another problem facing the established church was the poor condition of much ecclesiastical property in Warwickshire. The most serious problem was the disrepair of parish churches. Between 1614 and 1639, the churchwardens of 39 parishes in the archdeaconry of Coventry reported deficiencies in the fabric of their churches. This amounted to 28% of the benefices in the region. Of these, 27 parishes, or 19% of the total, described serious structural faults such as the decay of church walls, roofs or steeples.<sup>57</sup> Although no comparable figures are available for the southern part of the county, surviving parish records suggest that the problem was common in this area too. In 1628 a levy was raised in the parish of Welford "for the makinge of a newe roof for the parish church ... and the speedy repaireing of other decayed parts of the same".<sup>58</sup> The need for similar repairs was recorded in the churchwardens' accounts of Southam and Barcheston.<sup>59</sup>



Naturally, the decay of church buildings was most evident in the small, least prosperous parishes. The limited resources of these parishes meant that they were unable to provide adequate maintenance for their churches, or to finance major renovations when they were needed. The parish of Wolvey provides an extreme example of this situation. The following note was appended to the parish register in 1653:

"The roofo of the North Isle of the Church in Wolvey fell downe in the yeare 1620, [and] raither than buy new timber for the roofo, the wall was pulled downe and built up againe accordinge to the length of the old timber, which made the Isle far less than it was before."<sup>62</sup>

While most parishes managed to avoid such drastic innovations, it is clear that many churches had fallen into serious decay by the reign of Charles I. At Barcheston, for example, the churchwardens' accounts for 1635 recorded the purchase of "a prop to prop the church".<sup>63</sup>

The problem of decaying churches was combined with a lack of church artefacts in many parishes. In the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry between 1614 and 1639, 30 parishes reported that their churches were not fully provided with the items required in the bishops' articles. Of these, 22 were without artefacts necessary for the services of the church, such as Prayer Books, communion plate and clerical vestments. This amounted to 16% of the parishes in the archdeaconry.<sup>64</sup> In certain cases, churches were so poorly equipped that it was practically impossible for them to conduct services. For example, the churchwardens of Shustocke stated in 1614 that their church had no communion plate, and their minister lacked "a faire surplisse".<sup>65</sup> Three years later, it emerged that the parish of

Stockton was without a Prayer Book, a Bible and a communion flaggon, as well as decorative items such as a pulpit cloth and a pulpit cushion.<sup>66</sup>

To a certain extent, the authorities were able to improve the upkeep of churches, and the provision of ecclesiastical artefacts, by emphasising these areas in visitations. This was the case in Bishop Overall's visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1617.<sup>67</sup> The same policy was pursued in the metropolitan and episcopal visitations of the 1630s. In this period, the bishops of Lichfield and Worcester sought to improve the condition of the region's churches as part of a wider programme of "Laudian" reform. The implementation of this programme, and its impact on the established church in Warwickshire, is described in the following chapter.

## Chapter Two: Religious Policy in Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"The observance of ceremonies is, by his Majesties direction,  
now more pressed than of sundrie yeeres past."

John Burges, 1631<sup>1</sup>

In his annual report to the King in 1638, Archbishop Laud wrote that the diocese of Lichfield was in "reasonable good order". He found no cause for complaint in the diocese of Worcester, except for the activities of a Puritan minister in one Warwickshire parish.<sup>2</sup> When it was written, the Archbishop's assessment would not have seemed unduly optimistic. Indeed, there were no major religious controversies in Warwickshire during the 1630s. This fact is remarkable given the strong tradition of nonconformity in the region before the reign of Charles I, and the surge of Puritan activity which it experienced at the outbreak of the civil war. The apparent calm in the local church during the Laudian period appears to be an interesting anomaly.

This chapter sets out to explain this anomaly by examining the impact of Laud's regime on the county. It argues that Warwickshire was exposed to a series of "High Church" reforms during the 1630s, but that these were fairly limited in scale. In some areas, such as the repair and decoration of parish churches, the reforms were reasonably successful. In others, such as the attempt to suppress

nonconformity and restrict the activity of "godly" preachers, they were largely ineffective. This meant that the Puritan movement was not seriously challenged, and the county avoided the religious confrontations which affected other regions during the period. However, the members of the "godly" community were aware of the actions against them, and were appalled by the direction of ecclesiastical policy during the 1630s. Ultimately, this led to a backlash against the established church after the collapse of Laudianism in 1640.

The first section of this chapter surveys the attitudes of the bishops responsible for Warwickshire between 1603 and 1640. It argues that they did not pursue any consistent policy during the reign of James I. Under Charles I, they attempted to implement Laudian policies but were reluctant, for ideological or practical reasons, to do so with full-blooded vigour. Section two examines the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry between 1614 and 1639. (No comparable records have survived from the archdeaconry of Worcester.) It demonstrates that there was a broad shift towards Laudian policies in the region during the 1630s. The final section assesses the practical impact of these policies at the level of the parishes, based on surviving parish account books from the region.

## 1) The Bishops

The dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester were served by eight bishops from the accession of James I to the civil war, including such luminaries as George Abbot, John Overall and Thomas Morton. As has already been noted, episcopal appointments to Lichfield in this period were highly inconsistent. The Low Church George Abbot was elevated to Canterbury in 1611 and replaced by Richard Neile, later the vigorous agent of Laud's reforms in York.<sup>3</sup> Neile's successor in 1614 was another High Churchman, John Overall, who was replaced four years later by the Low Church Thomas Morton. Morton was followed by the Laudian Robert Wright in 1632, who remained until the civil war. The dominant figure in the diocese of Worcester was John Thornborough, a Low Churchman, whose episcopate extended from 1617 until his death in 1641.

This pattern of appointments indicates that there was no consistent religious policy in the region under James I. The diocese of Lichfield was used chiefly as a gift to churchmen for their services to the King, largely irrespective of their religious position. This policy appears to have changed under Charles I. His only appointment in the county, Robert Wright, was selected on the recommendation of William Laud, who clearly believed that he would advance the cause of High Church reform.<sup>4</sup> Charles was unfortunate, however, in having less opportunity than his father to introduce new candidates into the Warwickshire dioceses. Bishop Thornborough held on at Worcester until it was too late for any change to be effective,

while the disappointing Bishop Wright proved to be long-serving but unsuitable for promotion.

Under James I, the most "High Church" bishops of Lichfield were Richard Neile and John Overall. In doctrine, neither man was a thorough-going Calvinist. Overall had strongly defended Peter Baro in the Cambridge controversies about predestination in 1596.<sup>5</sup> In ecclesiastical matters, both men were advocates of a ceremonial style of worship. Both stressed the importance of uniformity, though Thomas Fuller implied that Overall was more "a discreet presser of conformity" than a zealous persecutor of Puritans.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess the impact of Bishop Neile in Warwickshire, since no visitations have been preserved from his period at Lichfield. Overall's episcopate, however, is documented by visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1614 and 1617. These tend to confirm his reputation as an proponent of "High Church" policies.

Overall's visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1614 led to presentments from three parishes for offences connected with Puritanism. This amounted to 5% of the total number of parishes recorded in the visitation book.<sup>7</sup> This compares with only 1% in his second visitation in 1617, and none in Morton's primary visitation in 1620.<sup>8</sup> Since these figures are small, and may indicate a normal fluctuation in the pattern of presentments for different offences, it would be unwise to base any definite conclusion on them. However, they possibly indicate Overall's commitment to the enforcement of uniformity.

Overall's second visitation in 1617 provides more compelling evidence of his policies in the region. It shows a dramatic increase in the number of parishes found to be lacking ecclesiastical artefacts, especially such ceremonial items as surplices, communion plate and communion table-cloths. Ten churches were found to be deficient in these items, amounting to 13% of the parishes recorded in the visitation.<sup>9</sup> This compares with only 2% in 1614 <sup>10</sup> and 3% in 1620.<sup>11</sup> As we have seen, Overall's drive to improve the provision of ceremonial artefacts in 1617 was not combined with a similar drive against Puritanism. It appears that, at least at this stage of his brief episcopate, he saw a more urgent priority in securing adequate provision for the services of the church.

Overall's departure in 1618 ushered in a long period of settled episcopal government under Thomas Morton. Despite his Low Church sympathies Morton also enjoyed the patronage of James I. Perhaps more surprisingly, he was promoted by Charles I to Durham in 1632. Doctrinally, Morton was a thorough-going Calvinist. He presented the case against Richard Montague at the York House Conference in 1626.<sup>12</sup> He defended the doctrine of predestination throughout his career, maintaining in 1642 that "the Grace of God is every way free and gratuitous". He combined this conviction with emphatic anti-Catholicism and the belief that English Protestants should make common cause with their continental brethren against "the tyranny of the Romish Antichrist".<sup>13</sup>

Despite Morton's promotion to Durham, his opinions did not always find favour with Charles I. In 1639, when the bishop sought to

publish a sermon against the Scottish rebels, the King obliged him to alter parts of the text. Passages asserting that the rebels could not justify their actions by appeals to Calvin were omitted. A reference to the high status of Calvin and Beza in the Protestant churches was toned down. In addition, the King amended one passage in which Morton asserted that the Catholic Church had utterly corrupted "the principall points of Religion".<sup>14</sup> The printed version stated less trenchantly that the Catholics had only corrupted those "Points wherof the new Roman Church hath made ... new Articles of faith".<sup>15</sup> Clearly, these changes indicate that Morton supported a more aggressively Calvinist and anti-Catholic version of Protestantism than the King.

In disciplinary matters, Morton advocated a policy of persuading Puritans to conformity rather than of persecution. In 1618, as Bishop of Chester, he had met with local nonconformist leaders to debate the issues which divided them from the church.<sup>16</sup> His personal position, which he advanced in published works in the 1620s, was that the disputed ceremonies were "things indifferent" which were fittingly commanded for the order and decency of services.<sup>17</sup> However, Morton was wary of pressing uniformity to the point where it created unseemly divisions. He was also persuaded of the need for a lively preaching ministry, and was extremely reluctant to lose enthusiastic ministers because of their scruples over particular rites.

It is clear that Morton put these beliefs into practice during his period at Lichfield. This fact is demonstrated by a letter which he sent, as Bishop of Durham, to Secretary Windebank in 1639. This



concerned the activities of a certain Anthony Lapthorne, a Northumberland minister accused of supporting the Scottish rebels, whom Morton had first encountered in his previous diocese:

"... when I was Bpp of Litchfeild I reduced him to Conformity... and placed him at Chanke [in Staffordshire], the most prophaine and barbarous Parish within that dioces, where he tooke sutch pains that he brought them to be as religious and orderly as any others." <sup>18</sup>

Lapthorne later moved to London, where he was presented to the High Commission for nonconformity and prohibited from preaching. He subsequently travelled north to seek out his former bishop, recently transferred to Durham, in the hope that he would allow him to resume his ministry. Morton acceded to this and placed Lapthorne in another poor parish, "not knowing of any that would be more laborious than he".<sup>19</sup>

Such attitudes naturally made an impression in Warwickshire. Morton's support for a preaching ministry was expressed strongly in his dealings with Coventry towards the end of his period in office. In 1632 the town corporation petitioned the bishop to permit the appointment of a lecturer, in the face of vociferous opposition from the incumbent of the town's two parishes, Samuel Buggs. Morton upheld the appeal as an "equall, religious & christian request of devout minds". He sharply rebuked Buggs for his own failure to preach constantly and directed him to accept a lecturer "or els to give mee such reason of your refusall which may stand on good Conscience".<sup>20</sup>

As well as supporting the lectureship in Coventry, Morton allowed lectureships to continue elsewhere in the county during his episcopate. There is evidence that they were flourishing in Birmingham and Nuneaton in the early 1630s.<sup>21</sup> The bishop's caution in enforcing uniformity was also apparent. The 1620 episcopal visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry, the only such record to survive from his period, contains no presentments of ministers for nonconformity. It is clear from all this that Morton was out of step with the ecclesiastical policies which were promoted by Charles I in the latter years of his episcopate, and which were to prevail nationally in the following decade.

Morton's successor as Bishop of Lichfield, Robert Wright, was a very different man. Wright owed his appointment in 1632 to William Laud, who was impressed by his management of his previous diocese of Bristol.<sup>22</sup> Wright's episcopate at Lichfield has been the subject of some dispute between historians. According to Julian Davies, he was one of the most "zealous proponents" of Laudian policies during the 1630s.<sup>23</sup> In contrast, Ann Hughes has described him as a "severe disappointment" to his superiors.<sup>24</sup> In fact, there is some truth in both interpretations. It seems that Wright was personally sympathetic to the policies of the Caroline church, but tempered his support for these policies with a degree of pragmatism and caution. This approach was combined with a rather negligent and self-serving attitude towards diocesan administration.

In the early years of his episcopate, Wright showed a willingness to implement Laudian "innovations". He introduced the practice of

bowing at the name of Jesus in his visitation of 1633.<sup>25</sup> In 1634 he initiated the policy of converting communion-tables into "altars", though this was not fully implemented in the archdeaconry of Coventry until after the metropolitan visitation of 1635.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Thomas Morton, Wright had no personal reservations about the prosecution of nonconformists. It will be shown in section two that his visitations in 1636 and 1639 placed a distinct emphasis on the maintenance of uniformity. In addition, the bishop made a serious effort to improve both the fabric and decoration of the county's churches.

However, despite these qualities, Wright was far from a model Laudian bishop. He had a distinctly worldly approach towards ecclesiastical affairs, and was inclined to direct his efforts towards his own financial interests. Anthony Wood described him as "much given up to affairs of the world".<sup>27</sup> In 1636 he was sharply rebuked by Laud for allegedly despoiling the episcopal estate of Eccleshall in Staffordshire.<sup>28</sup> Throughout his episcopate, Wright was criticised for his failure to submit annual accounts of the state of the diocese. When he finally made an account in 1638 it gave no detail of the religious situation in the diocese, but was taken up with complaints about the leasing arrangement for one of his official residences.<sup>29</sup>

Wright's personal negligence was combined with a rather pragmatic and cautious approach towards the implementation of Laudian policies. This was exemplified in his dealings with Coventry. In 1636 Charles Twysden, the chancellor of the diocese, ordered that the communion tables in the town's two parishes should be moved to the east end of

the chancel and railed off.<sup>30</sup> This was performed accordingly. However, the measure was opposed by the town corporation, who appealed to Wright for a judgment on the matter. In March 1637 the bishop ruled that the altar-rails could be removed from St Michael's church; the communion table could be moved into the nave for the celebration of the sacrament and returned to the chancel for the rest of the week.<sup>31</sup> With this formula Wright avoided a potentially bitter controversy at the cost of seriously diluting the spirit of Laudian reform.

Similarly, Wright's pragmatism deterred him from suppressing any of the Warwickshire lectureships during the 1630s. Lectures continued without restriction in Nuneaton, Coventry and Birmingham throughout the decade.<sup>32</sup> In many cases, these provided a platform for ministers who were openly hostile to the Caroline church. Richard Vines, the Puritan minister of Weddington, attracted large crowds from across the region to his lectures at Nuneaton.<sup>33</sup> Nonconformists such as Humphrey Fenn and Tristram Diamond were free to preach in Coventry in the same period.<sup>34</sup> Undoubtedly, Wright's failure to suppress the lectureships reflected his reluctance to engage in potentially difficult and acrimonious disputes. In effect, this meant a decade of "Laudian" reform with only a limited restriction of Puritan freedom. This tendency was compounded by the usual practical problems of enforcing ecclesiastical discipline, considered in the previous chapter.

Before leaving the diocese of Lichfield, it is necessary to consider the attitudes of the archdeacons of Coventry. The archdeacons

enjoyed less authority than the bishops, but were actively involved in the general supervision of the Warwickshire parishes. No presentments to the archdeacon's court have survived from the early Stuart period, and it is therefore impossible to make a detailed assessment of the impact of the different men who held the office. However, the religious opinions of the archdeacons can be ascertained from a variety of other sources. These reveal that there was little consistency in the appointment of the archdeacons during the period.

The longest serving archdeacon of Coventry was William Hinton, who held the position between 1584 and his death in 1631. He also served as vicar of St Michael's in Coventry until 1623. Hinton was a High Churchman, who supported the vehemently anti-Puritan opinions of Francis Holyoake, the minister of Southam. In 1609 he invited Holyoake to preach a sermon at the archidiaconal visitation in Coventry, which was later published as A Sermon of Obedience, Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall (1610). Hinton composed the introduction to this work, in which he derided the Puritan community as "giddie heads".<sup>35</sup> During his ministry at St Michael's, Hinton was involved in a dispute with the Puritan members of his congregation over the administration of the eucharist. In 1611 he ordered his parishioners to receive the communion kneeling, in accordance with the 1604 canons.<sup>36</sup> This decision provoked "great trouble" in the town, which is examined in Chapter Eight.

Hinton was succeeded as archdeacon by Samuel Brooke, another High Churchman, whose tenure lasted only four months.<sup>37</sup> In September 1631 Brooke was followed by Ralph Brownrigg, a man with decidedly

Low Church sympathies, who retained the office until 1642. Brownrigg was personally committed to an enthusiastic preaching ministry. He regarded "preaching ... as the Sun in the Firmament, not to be darkened till the last day",<sup>38</sup> It is likely that Brownrigg's outlook allowed him to maintain a sympathetic relationship with the Puritan clergy during the 1630s. Indeed, Brownrigg seems to have enjoyed the respect of moderate Puritans until the outbreak of the civil war. He preached at the parliamentary fast of November 1640.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Fuller lamented his death in 1659 because he believed that, had he lived, he would have been "instrumental to the composure of Church differences" following the Restoration.<sup>40</sup>

In the diocese of Worcester the local leadership was scarcely more satisfactory to the Laudian party than at Lichfield. Here John Thornborough, appointed by James I in 1617, continued as bishop until 1641, denying the crown the opportunity to introduce a Laudian reformer in the 1630s. No visitations survive from Thornborough's period. It is clear, however, that he shared many of Wright's pragmatic reservations about the strict implementation of Laud's policies. Moreover, he was personally unsympathetic to many of the policies themselves. He was a keen supporter of the preaching ministry and was reluctant to prosecute nonconformists with vigour.

Thornborough's doctrinal position was expressed in his one published work as Bishop of Worcester, a treatise on the eucharist entitled The Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ (1630). This presented a typically robust defence of the established English service against the arguments of both Catholics and nonconformists. The book was

notable, however, for its emphasis on the personal experience of God's Grace above and beyond the outward forms of the sacrament:

"Let noe man thinke that the communication of Christs benefits consisteth barely in the *Priests* consecration and *deliverie* of bread ... It is the worke of the holy spirit, which doth inwardly, by a secret power ... nourish the faithfull receiver" <sup>41</sup>

To Thornborough, the eucharist was a sign of the "invisible sanctification" of the individual by God; it was not the means or even the main indication of salvation.<sup>42</sup> This view was not incompatible with the rather vague position held by Archbishop Laud. Nonetheless, it is clear that Thornborough tended to place a greater emphasis on the non-ceremonial aspects of the church's ministry.

The practical expression of this outlook was the bishop's support for the preaching ministry in his diocese. This was demonstrated most strikingly in a conflict which arose in Worcester following the appointment of a new dean, Simon Potter, in 1637. Potter attempted to deny the Cathedral pulpit to the town's two lecturers, provoking protests to Thornborough from the corporation. The bishop came down firmly in support of the lecturers. He petitioned Archbishop Laud to force Potter to yield, complaining that the dean had behaved "like a blustering winde".<sup>43</sup> The dean responded with a letter to Laud in which he derided Thornborough as a favourer of "seditious" preachers.<sup>44</sup> It appears that Laud sided with Potter, since the bishop was eventually forced to back down. Thornborough stated that he had suppressed the lectureship at Worcester in his annual report on the diocese in 1637.<sup>45</sup>

Thornborough's reluctance to restrict preaching activities was also evident in Warwickshire. A lectureship continued at Stratford-upon-Avon throughout his period in office.<sup>46</sup> There is evidence that both morning and afternoon sermons were widely available in the area around Warwick in the 1630s.<sup>47</sup> The bishop combined this easy-going approach with an unwillingness to prosecute the county's nonconformist ministers with severity. This was highlighted by his treatment of the Puritan lecturer Samuel Clarke in Warwick. Clarke, who was repeatedly presented for the omission of ceremonies during the early 1630s, later recalled that "the bishop ... being an old man, and peacable, dealt so fairly that still I got off".<sup>48</sup>

Thornborough's differences with Archbishop Laud in the last decade of his episcopate were also apparent in his dealings with Stratford-upon-Avon. In 1635 proceedings began in the Court of High Commission against the town's minister, Thomas Wilson, who was accused of various forms of nonconformity. In the following year, Thornborough submitted evidence to the court regarding the minister's behaviour. The bishop's report stated that Wilson had been guilty of numerous acts of indiscipline in the past, but that he had recently "demeaned himself orderly & conformably", giving no "cause for his reproofe".<sup>49</sup> Laud pointedly dismissed this testimony in court, accepting instead the claims of Wilson's enemies in Stratford that he was "conformable in nothing". Accordingly he directed that the proceedings should continue against him.<sup>50</sup>

As with Wright, it should be noted that Thornborough *did* enact a limited programme of Laudian reform in Warwickshire. It will be



shown in section three that he presided over the introduction of altar rails in the county's churches during the 1630s. One radical Puritan minister, Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall, even felt compelled to depart for New England in 1639 because of the bishop's proceedings against him.<sup>51</sup> However, it is obvious that Thornborough was never an enthusiastic agent of this programme. He was personally unsympathetic to the church leadership of the 1630s, and he does not appear to have pressed Laud's national policies beyond the minimum that was required. This attitude created a situation similar to that in the rest of the county: "Laudianism" was introduced at a superficial level, without fundamentally impeding the activities of the Puritan minority. This situation was exacerbated by the practical difficulties of imposing stricter ecclesiastical discipline, which were set out in Chapter One.

## **2) Visitations Of The Archdeaconry Of Coventry, 1614-1639**

The best way to assess the ecclesiastical policies which were pursued in early Stuart Warwickshire, at least in the large part of the county which belonged to the diocese of Lichfield, is to examine the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry. Records of episcopal visitations in this area survive from 1614, 1617, 1620, 1636 and 1639, together with Brent's metropolitan visitation in 1635. These can be supplemented by documents from Lichfield consistory court: these survive from throughout the period, but their pattern of preservation is irregular, and they probably do not represent the

court's entire workload. Some additional information can be found in Warwickshire parish records where they have been preserved.

The entries in the available visitation books are divided between the four deaneries of Arden, Coventry, Stoneleigh and Marton. These cover the areas around Birmingham, Coventry, Kenilworth and Southam respectively. The volume of information in each book varies according to the number of entries from each of these deaneries. The visitations of 1620, 1635 and 1636 cover all four completely, and each totals around 100 parishes. In 1614 and 1617 only part of the deaneries of Coventry and Stoneleigh are represented, and the total is around 70 parishes. In 1639 Stoneleigh is omitted altogether (and has probably been lost, since the book appears to be incomplete), and the total number of parishes is 61. The records also vary in the quality of detail that they contain: the 1620 visitation tends to provide less information from individual parishes, while the metropolitan visitation of 1635 is particularly well documented.

These differences between the sources mean that they must be treated with some caution. Nonetheless, it is possible to make some useful comparisons between them. They all include the same range of information: the goods contained in parish churches and the condition of church buildings and land; the names of alleged non-churchgoers, Catholics and nonconformists; and the names of those suspected of moral offences such as blasphemy, drunkenness and fornication. The visitation books also record a consistent level of presentments for those offences which one would expect to be unaffected by changing ecclesiastical policies. For example, the number of parishes

presenting people for sexual incontinence and fornication was fairly constant at between 18-22% in the five surviving visitations between 1617 and 1639.<sup>52</sup>

It was argued in section one that Bishop Wright was reluctant, for practical reasons, to impose Laudian reforms with great vigour, especially in controversial areas such as the suppression of lectureships. However, it is clear from the visitations of 1635, 1636 and 1639 that his episcopate was marked by a shift in ecclesiastical policy in a distinctly Laudian direction. This was apparent in many areas. Compared with the period 1614-1620, the 1630s were characterised by a greater attention to the rituals of the church, and a corresponding increase in the number of presentments for nonconformity. This was combined with a new emphasis on the maintenance and decoration of parish churches.

In part, this can be explained by Wright's personal sympathy with Laudian policies. This meant that he was prepared to implement these policies, despite his rather worldly and pragmatic approach towards diocesan administration. It also appears that he was spurred on by the metropolitan visitation of 1635. Surviving churchwardens' accounts from the archdeaconry show that the implementation of Laudian policies was accelerated following Brent's visitation. For example, it was only after 1635 that altar-rails were introduced in the majority of Warwickshire parishes.<sup>53</sup> Episcopal supervision was also increased following Brent's visitation. Before 1635 none of the accounts recorded official "visits" to inspect the condition of parish

churches; after 1635 visits of this kind were recorded at Kenilworth, Kingsbury and Offchurch.<sup>54</sup>

On the whole, Wright's episcopate was characterised by the new approach he brought to familiar aspects of ecclesiastical policy, rather than the introduction of "innovations". Some new policies were imposed during the 1630s, however, and these will be considered before we examine the records of the visitations in detail. Wright's earliest innovation concerned the practice of bowing at the name of Jesus. In the articles of visitation issued by Bishop Morton in 1629, churchgoers were enjoined to display "due and lowly reverence when the blessed Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned".<sup>55</sup> This requirement was extended by Wright in the articles of his first visitation in 1633. These directed parishioners to "reverently bow body or knee" when the name of the Saviour was read, and instructed parish churchwardens to report any individuals who failed to comply.<sup>56</sup>

Wright introduced two other, less dramatic innovations in the articles of his first visitation. Both were designed to emphasise the formal worship of the church, and to challenge the Puritan community's preoccupation with sermons. Firstly, churchwardens were instructed to report parishioners who came to church to hear sermons but failed to attend formal Prayers, thereby "making a schisme betweene the use of publicke prayer and preaching". In addition, they were directed to present members of their community who refused to attend services performed by non-preaching ministers.<sup>57</sup> Neither of

these orders had been included in the articles of visitation issued by Bishop Morton in 1629.

The most important innovation during Wright's episcopate was the erection of altar rails in parish churches. This practice was initiated by the bishop before the metropolitan visitation. In 1634 the churchwardens of Wombourne in Staffordshire recorded that the communion table in their church "was new rayled about by the appointment of Authority". It appears that this alteration was directed by Bishop Wright; a series of other, more minor reforms were made to the church in the same year "by order from the Lord Bishop".<sup>52</sup> Two other Staffordshire parishes, Seighford and Bradeley, were fined in 1634 "for want of a frame to sett about the Comunion table". Both parishes had erected altar rails by the end of the year.<sup>53</sup>

There is evidence that the introduction of altar rails was also imposed in the archdeaconry of Coventry before 1635. In 1632 the churchwardens of Holy Trinity in Coventry were summoned to Lichfield "at the Lord Bishop's speciall comaund". The purpose of this meeting was not recorded in the parish accounts, but it seems likely that the bishop used the occasion to order alterations to the church. In 1633 the churchwardens recorded expenses "for making the rales about the Comunion table".<sup>54</sup> Altar rails were also erected in the parish of Southam in 1634.<sup>55</sup> In this case, it is possible that the reform was made on the initiative of the rector, Francis Holyoake, who was an ardent supporter of "High Church" policies throughout the early Stuart period.<sup>56</sup>

The imposition of altar rails was enforced more widely following the metropolitan visitation in 1635. Churchwardens' accounts show that at least five parishes in the archdeaconry of Coventry erected altar rails between 1635 and 1638.<sup>63</sup> The churchwardens of Polesworth were criticised in the episcopal visitation of 1636 "for not providing a sufficient communion table and a raile as is required".<sup>64</sup> In the same period, new orders were introduced concerning the position of communion tables in parish churches. In 1636 Bishop Wright ruled that the communion tables of St Michael's and Holy Trinity in Coventry "should be removed up close to the East wall of the Chancell", and "the upper end of the Chancell bee handsomely rayseed by three stepps".<sup>65</sup> The churchwardens' accounts from Kingsbury and Nether Whitacre indicate that the communion tables in these parishes were placed in the chancel in the same period.<sup>66</sup>

The metropolitan visitation in 1635 imposed further reforms on the local church. During his stay at Coventry, Nathaniel Brent ordered that the services in the parishes of St Michael's and Holy Trinity should begin at the same time, to prevent people "gadding" to hear more than one sermon on a Sunday.<sup>67</sup> Presumably, Brent intended this direction to apply to parishes throughout the archdeaconry. The order was not incorporated in Wright's articles of visitation after 1635, and there is no evidence that it was enforced in the region in this period. However, it appears that increased emphasis was placed on the offence of "gadding" in the visitations of 1636 and 1639.<sup>68</sup>

It is possible that Brent introduced two further regulations concerning preaching in 1635. These were contained in a list of

thirteen instructions to the clergy in the diocese of Gloucester, which the Vicar General visited in June 1635. One of the new orders, aimed at the over-long sermons of the Puritan clergy, directed that sermons should not exceed an hour in duration. The second effectively prohibited Sunday afternoon lectures, stating that "all ministers are to catechise evrye Sunday in the afternoone insteade of sermons".<sup>69</sup> Again, these directions were not included in Wright's visitation articles. There is no evidence that they were enforced in the visitations of the arch<sup>h</sup>deaconry of Coventry in 1636 or 1639.

Besides introducing new policies, the visitations of the 1630s were distinctly Laudian in many other ways. One important area was their emphasis on the repair of church buildings. As was noted in the previous chapter, many Warwickshire churches were suffering from physical deterioration throughout the early Stuart period. Thus 8% of parishes reported deficiencies in their fabric during the visitation of 1614, and 12% did so in 1617. This figure rose to 18% in 1635, falling back to 15% in 1639.<sup>70</sup> These figures in themselves are unremarkable. But an interesting pattern emerges from the different types of defects which were reported at different times.

None of the parishes represented in 1614 or 1617 mentioned any specific problems with the chancel of their church. The most common faults were decaying aisles, inadequate pews and broken windows. Defects of this kind were also reported in 1635; but seven parishes, or 6% of the total, also mentioned faults in the chancel. This rose to 8%, or five parishes, in the episcopal visitation in 1639.<sup>71</sup> In a few cases, the problem was so grave that it might well have been

reported at any time: in Sowe, for example, the chancel ceiling was in such poor repair in 1635 that the communion table was soiled by "birds and dust falling from the roof".<sup>72</sup> But most of the faults were less serious. The most common of those specified were inadequate paintwork and windows. This indicates that the authorities were placing greater emphasis on the maintenance of chancels during the 1630s, in the spirit of Laud's High Church reforms.

A notable feature of the visitation in 1639 was the mention of "visits" to five parishes by diocesan officials. No similar inspections have been recorded in any earlier visitations, though they were mentioned in a number of parish records from 1635 onwards. The subject of the inspection in all five parishes was the condition of the church. Two inspections were aimed specifically at the chancel: at Shustocke the chancel was found to need "glassing and whyting", and at Long Ichington the seats and ceiling needed repair. In the other three parishes only unspecified "repairs" were mentioned. These had been completed at Hardwick Priors and Packington following the visit, but "noe reformation" had been effected at Coleshill.<sup>73</sup>

Inspections of this kind were the most direct and effective means of asserting ecclesiastical authority. Their introduction indicates that Wright was serious about improving the quality of the county's churches. It is interesting that they appear to have been used almost entirely to oversee the maintenance of church buildings, rather than to enforce religious uniformity. No doubt this was because it was much easier to inspect a repair to a church than to investigate the behaviour of a minister or his congregation, though



there was nothing in principle to prevent more wide-ranging parish inspections. It appears that Wright preferred to rely on more traditional methods to enforce episcopal policy in these more difficult areas.

As with the repair of churches, a move towards a more High Church policy was apparent in the accounts of church artefacts recorded in the visitations in the 1630s. Here the difference was less dramatic because of Bishop Overall's earlier drive to improve the provision of ceremonial items in the region's churches in 1617. In Overall's visitation 13% of parishes reported deficiencies in items such as service books, surplices and communion plate.<sup>74</sup> However, it seems that Overall's policy was cut short by his promotion to Norwich in the following year. His successor, Bishop Morton, showed little interest in continuing his work. In Morton's first visitation in 1620 only three parishes provided information about the condition of their ceremonial artefacts, representing 3% of the total.<sup>75</sup>

In contrast, the visitations in the 1630s placed a consistent emphasis on the provision of ceremonial items. Brent's visitation in 1635 found ten parishes, or 9% of the total, lacking ceremonial artefacts.<sup>76</sup> These included service books, communion table-cloths and plate. The episcopal visitation in 1639 recorded four parishes, or 7% of the total, in which the minister was not provided with a hood.<sup>77</sup> Thus it is clear that the authorities maintained pressure in this area throughout the period, although it was never given the very high priority which was evident in 1617. Moreover, the obvious emphasis on clerical hoods in 1639 indicates a systematic approach

to the problem, similar to the attempt to improve the fabric of parish chancels.

The pattern of presentments of individuals for offences against the church also suggests a move in a Laudian direction. One area in which this was evident was the defence of ecclesiastical rights, especially in financial matters. In 1614 only one parish presented a parishioner for failure to pay church dues; none did so in 1617.<sup>78</sup> The 1620 visitation recorded four parishes, or 4% of the total, in which one or more parishioners refused to make payments to the church.<sup>79</sup> This figure rose to ten parishes, or 9% of the total, in the metropolitan visitation in 1635.<sup>80</sup> It fell only slightly to four parishes, or 7% of the total, in 1639.<sup>81</sup> Thus the presentment of non-contributors was more common, and more consistent, during the 1630s than in the earlier period.

One possible reason for this was Wright's drive to improve the fabric of parish churches, since the cost of repairs was passed on to parishioners in the form of levies. Unfortunately, in most cases of non-payment the visitation records provide no information on the purpose for which the disputed "dues" were being collected. One exception to this is an entry from Ladbroke in 1639, when a parishioner was presented for "for not payinge towarde the repayre of the church".<sup>82</sup> Evidence can also be found in the surviving papers of Lichfield consistory court. Four cases of disputes over levies for repairs to Warwickshire churches survive from the 1620s.<sup>83</sup> This figure is doubled for the period 1631-1636.<sup>84</sup> Unfortunately, no further cases have been preserved after this date.

Another probable factor was the attempt by the authorities to increase the revenue from the glebe lands of the Warwickshire parishes during the 1630s. This was done by requiring all churches to provide updated terriers of their estates. The visitations of 1614, 1617 and 1620 obtained no information of this kind at all. In contrast, Brent found fifteen parishes to be lacking terriers in 1635.<sup>85</sup> A more thorough survey was undertaken in the episcopal visitation in the following year, which found just over half of the parishes in the archdeaconry to be without terriers.<sup>86</sup> The 1639 visitation was less detailed in this respect, but again it recorded seven parishes, or 11% of the total, which were without terriers.<sup>87</sup> It is difficult to assess the success of this policy; but it is likely that new terriers were drawn up in a number of parishes. This may well have led to an increase in church rents in some parts of the county.

The most dramatic increase in presentments for a particular offence was in the area of nonconformity. Here it is necessary to exercise some caution in interpreting the visitation books, since they are not always clear about whether an offence was inspired by Puritanism or not. For example, the refusal of a parishioner to attend Prayers may indicate a distaste for liturgical forms of worship; equally, it may reflect a general indifference to the church. However, in most instances the evidence is more conclusive: practices such as gadding to sermons, refusing to stand for the creed or to kneel during communion can only be interpreted as expressions of nonconformity. This second category of "definite" Puritan offences has been used as the basis for the following analysis.

As was shown in section one, Bishop Overall's primary visitation in 1614 led to presentments from three parishes, or 5% of the total, for offences connected with Puritanism.<sup>88</sup> However, this level of presentments was not sustained in the visitations of 1617 and 1620, which included only one presentment of this kind between them.<sup>89</sup> This material can be supplemented by surviving documents from Lichfield consistory court: these record prosecutions for nonconformity at Wishaw in 1615, Burton Hastings in 1617 and Foleshill in 1618.<sup>90</sup> Taken together, these sources demonstrate that a mere 4% of the parishes in the archdeaconry presented nonconformists to the authorities between 1614 and 1620.

There was a marked increase in the number of nonconformists reported to Brent's visitation in 1635. Nine parishes, or 8% of the total, presented at least one person for nonconformist activities.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, Brent mentioned in the abstract of his visitation to Archbishop Laud that he had suspended the nonconformist ministers of Frankton and Honiley, although this information was not recorded in the visitation book itself.<sup>92</sup> Thus the inhabitants of at least 10% of the parishes in the archdeaconry faced prosecutions for Puritanism in 1635. Four different parishes presented nonconformists in the episcopal visitation in the following year.<sup>93</sup> The pressure was maintained in 1639 when five parishes, or 8% of the total recorded, reported cases of nonconformity.<sup>94</sup>

It is not possible to supplement this material with consistory court records, since none have survived for cases of nonconformity after 1628. But at least two instances of Puritanism in the archdeaconry

were recorded in prosecutions by the High Commission in the 1630s, neither of which was mentioned in the visitations: one at Brinklow in 1637, and another in Birmingham in 1638.<sup>95</sup> Taken together, the sources show that at least 22 parishes in the archdeaconry presented Puritans to the authorities between 1635 and 1639. This represents 16% of the parishes in the archdeaconry. Even allowing for some possible inaccuracy caused by the irregular preservation of material, this represents a significant change from the situation in the period 1614-1620.

This fact provokes an obvious question. Did it reflect a policy of stricter supervision during the 1630s, or an increase in the incidence of nonconformity? The answer is suggested by the nature of the offences recorded during the Laudian period. Some cases of extreme Puritanism, in which services were disrupted or ministers abused, would probably have been presented at any time. Their appearance in the documents after 1635 indicates that they occurred more frequently in this period. At Sowe, for example, a group of alleged separatists were presented for openly denouncing their minister in church in 1635. In the same year, a parishioner from Leamington Hastings was accused of assaulting the rector and setting himself up as a preacher outside the parish church on Sundays.<sup>96</sup>

However, the majority of offences in the 1630s were much less serious. The most common abuses were gadding to sermons and refusing to kneel during communion. Activities of this kind accounted for all the presentments for nonconformity in the visitation of 1639.<sup>97</sup> Such incidents reflected established patterns

of Puritan behaviour, which were well documented in the county before the 1630s. It is impossible to know whether Puritanism became more prevalent in the region as a whole during the reign of Charles I, but case studies of Coventry and Stratford (see later chapters) indicate that it was fairly well established throughout the early Stuart period. Therefore, the best explanation for the increase in presentments during the 1630s is that greater priority was given to the problem in Bishop Wright's visitations.

Alongside the increase in presentments for nonconformity during the 1630s, it is interesting to observe one offence which was *less* frequently reported. This was Sabbath-breaking. In the visitation of 1614 four parishes, or 6% of the total, presented Sabbath-breakers. Their offences ranged from carting barley to unspecified "misbehaviour upon the saboath day".<sup>98</sup> Six parishes, or 8%, made similar presentments in 1617.<sup>99</sup> In 1635, however, only one parish reported an incident of this kind; and none did so in 1636 or 1639.<sup>100</sup> Eight parishes did report offenders for working "when they should be at church" in 1635, which probably meant that they were working on Sunday. But in none of these cases was the violation of the Sabbath mentioned as the reason for their presentment.<sup>101</sup>

It is instructive to compare this record with the treatment of Sabbath-breaking in the civil courts, which also exercised jurisdiction in this area. Indictments at the Warwick Quarter Sessions have been preserved from the period 1632-1642. Between 1635 and 1640 they record seven cases of Sabbath-breaking, covering such diverse activities as drinking, killing swine and carrying corn.

In every case the offender was charged specifically with performing the activity on the Lord's Day, and in only one was it mentioned that he should also have been in church at the time.<sup>102</sup> Only one comparable case is recorded in the three visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in the same period.<sup>103</sup> It appears that Sabbath-breaking, as an offence distinct from absence from church, was given a low priority in the visitations of the 1630s. This was clearly in accord with the Laudian values applied in the period.

To sum up, the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry suggest that many more parishes were exposed to "High Church" policies in the period after 1635 than in the period 1614-1620, when comparable records are available. This experience was bound to have alienated Puritan elements within the local church. But despite this, there appears to have been little effective restriction on preaching in the region; and in the case of Coventry, at least, the authorities showed that they were prepared to back down in the face of strong nonconformist opposition. This combination of factors led to the worst possible outcome for the leaders of the church: an increasingly aggrieved Puritan minority which was able, nonetheless, to continue its activities largely unchecked.

### 3) The Impact of Reform, 1632-1640

The records of the metropolitan visitation of 1635, and the episcopal visitations of 1636 and 1639, reveal that the majority of parishes in

the archdeaconry of Coventry came into contact with the religious policies promoted by Archbishop Laud. It is reasonable to assume that this was also the case in the third of Warwickshire which belonged to the diocese of Worcester, though there are no comparable records for this region. Given this, how effective were Laudian policies at the level of the parishes? One way to approach this question is by comparing the entries for particular parishes in the visitation books of the archdeaconry of Coventry between 1635 and 1639.

This approach provides some interesting information, particularly on the failure of parishes to redress problems identified in the metropolitan visitation. For example, three parish churches which were found to be out of repair in 1635 were still unsatisfactory in 1639. In two of the parishes concerned, Coleshill and Shustocke, serious repairs had been neglected despite inspections from diocesan officials.<sup>104</sup> In other cases, it appears that the visitations failed to prevent violations of ecclesiastical rights. The parishioners of Whitacre, who were reported for encroaching on church property in 1635, were presented for the same offence four years later.<sup>105</sup> In Ladbroke, parish levies which had not been paid in 1635 were still outstanding in 1639.<sup>106</sup>

However, the records of the visitations are limited as a source for assessing the impact of Laudian policies. The quality of the presentments varied from year to year, according to the diligence of the churchwardens elected in particular parishes. As a result, it is difficult to trace the condition of any one parish in detail between



1635 and 1639. Moreover, the visitation books provide no information on the positive impact of the policies introduced in the period. While the presentments in 1636 and 1639 demonstrate the failure of Laudianism in certain parishes, they do not record the reforms which were actually carried out. In order to assess these positive developments, it is necessary to examine the records of the parishes themselves.

The most valuable parish documents are the churchwardens' account books, which record the expenses of churchwardens on the maintenance of church buildings and the purchase of ecclesiastical artefacts. The account books of thirteen Warwickshire parishes have survived from the reign of Charles I. Eleven of these include accounts from the 1620s and 1630s; the other two only record accounts from the 1630s. The books, which have been preserved at random, represent a reasonable cross-section of the benefices in the county. The parishes represented were spread evenly across the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester. They varied considerably in size and wealth, from small rural communities such as Barcheston and Offchurch, to larger parishes such as Southam, Kenilworth and St Nicholas' in Warwick.

The accounts of these parishes suggest that the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s made a considerable impact in Warwickshire. One area in which this impact was felt was the upkeep of parish churches. Obviously, the maintenance of churches was a priority for churchwardens throughout the Stuart period: the records of Fillongley, Kenilworth, Southam and Welford-upon-Avon reveal that extensive

repairs were undertaken in certain parishes during the reign of James I.<sup>107</sup> However, it appears that the refurbishment of parish churches gathered pace during the 1630s. In those parishes where repairs were already underway, the scale of the improvements was extended. In other parishes, it appears that major repairs were initiated by the policies of the Laudian regime.

The work undertaken in the 1630s varied according to the condition of the parishes. At Kenilworth, the extensive re-tiling of the church began in 1634, and continued throughout the decade; this was combined with the re-paving of the church, and a series of repairs to the bells.<sup>108</sup> At Southam, a new set of bells was hung in 1637.<sup>109</sup> In other parishes, it appears that major structural repairs were necessary: the churchwardens of Barcheston disbursed £12 on the rebuilding of part of the nave in 1632.<sup>110</sup> As well as general work of this kind, improvements were initiated in the specific areas which were emphasised in the visitations. For example, repairs were made to the chancels of the churches in Kenilworth, Kingsbury and Warwick.<sup>111</sup>

In many parishes, the repairs to the fabric of the church were accompanied by major redecorations. The churchwardens of St Nicholas in Warwick recorded expenses for painting and "beawtifying" their church in 1632.<sup>112</sup> In 1636 the accounts from Southam recorded payments "for the whiteninge and paynting of the church".<sup>113</sup> The churches of Fillongley and Nether Whitacre were extensively redecorated in the following year.<sup>114</sup> As well as general decorations of this kind, it appears that the parishes in the region were

required to adorn their churches with paintings of the King's Arms. The King's Arms were painted in the church of St Nicholas in Warwick in 1632, Kenilworth in 1637 and Kingsbury in 1638.<sup>115</sup>

Inevitably, the renovation and adornment of churches led to the raising of financial levies in certain parishes. A levy was imposed in Southam in 1630 to fund the releading of the church roof.<sup>116</sup> Two levies "towards the repaire of the Church" were introduced in Fillongley in 1632.<sup>117</sup> In the parish of Barcheston, a series of financial demands were made throughout the decade: five levies were raised "for the repair of the Church and the payement of Church debts" between 1633 and 1639.<sup>118</sup> It is probable that similar levies were imposed in many other parishes in this period, though these were not always recorded in the surviving churchwardens' accounts. If this was the case, it would help to explain the increase in presentments for the failure to pay parish dues in the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in the 1630s.

As well as improving the physical condition of churches, the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s led parishes to make better provision for the performance of services. Throughout the early Stuart period, parishes were required to possess various artefacts necessary for the rites of the church, such as Prayer Books and vestments for the clergy. The surviving account books suggest that churchwardens were reasonably conscientious in maintaining these items before 1630. For example, the churchwardens of St Nicholas' in Warwick purchased a new Prayer Book in 1617.<sup>119</sup> The parish of Welford-upon-Avon acquired two new Prayer Books in 1625.<sup>120</sup> A new

surplice was made for the minister of Berkswell in 1614, and for the minister of Kingsbury in 1626.<sup>121</sup>

However, it is clear that there was a considerable increase in spending on articles of this kind during the Laudian period. Between 1633 and 1640, the accounts from six Warwickshire parishes recorded the acquisition of new Prayer Books and books for the service of communion.<sup>122</sup> In the same period, the churchwardens of Foleshill, Kenilworth, Ryton-upon-Dunsmore and Southam provided new surplices for their ministers.<sup>123</sup> At Southam, over £2 was allocated for the manufacture of the new garment, complete with a purple lace collar. More modestly, the accounts from the parish of Offchurch recorded a payment for repairing the parish vestments in 1634.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, the churchwardens of St Nicholas' in Warwick paid for a new collar to be sewn on to their minister's surplice in 1638.<sup>125</sup>

Throughout the 1630s, churchwardens were particularly concerned with providing the artefacts required for the service of communion. The most important and expensive of these was the communion plate. In 1633 a new communion cup was purchased for the parish of Southam.<sup>126</sup> The churchwardens of four other parishes purchased new communion flaggons between 1633 and 1637.<sup>127</sup> In other parishes, the condition of the existing plate was improved. For example, the churchwardens of Kingsbury recorded expenses "for mendinge the Comunion Cup" in 1633. Three years later, they were obliged to transport the cup to Coventry, where it underwent further repairs.<sup>128</sup>

The effort to improve the quality of the communion plate in the parishes of Warwickshire was assisted by donations from members of the laity. The most important contribution came from Lady Alice Dudley, the aunt of Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh, who made "the free and bountifull gift" of gilt flaggons, patens and chalices to five churches in the region in 1638.<sup>129</sup> On a smaller scale, a gift of communion plate was recorded in the account book of Shipstone-upon-Stour: two pewter flaggons were received from John Robbins, "a citizen of London", in 1630.<sup>130</sup> In total, ten Warwickshire parishes are known to have acquired new plate in the course of the decade.<sup>131</sup>

As well as obtaining new plate, many parishes acquired new adornments for their communion tables during the Laudian period. Between 1629 and 1639, the churchwardens of four parishes recorded the purchase of communion table-clothes in their accounts.<sup>132</sup> The accounts of another three parishes, Ryton, Southam and St Nicholas' in Warwick, listed payments "for mending of the Comunion Carpett".<sup>133</sup> The churchwardens of Kingsbury purchased "matts for the Communion Table" in 1632.<sup>134</sup> In addition to buying table decorations, certain parishes made repairs and decorations to the tables themselves. The accounts from Kenilworth, Kingsbury and St Nicholas' in Warwick recorded repairs to their communion tables in the 1630s.<sup>135</sup> In 1637, the churchwardens of Holy Trinity in Coventry made payments to "Communion table Colourers".<sup>136</sup>

The most dramatic effect of the ecclesiastical policies of the Laudian period was the introduction of altar rails. Of the thirteen parishes for which accounts have survived from the 1630s, nine had

erected altar rails by 1638.<sup>137</sup> Three of the other four, Welford-upon-Avon, Foleshill and Kineton, have gaps in their accounts in the mid-1630s, and it is likely that they installed altar rails as well. Only the parish of Offchurch, whose accounts are complete for the whole decade, appears to have neglected the order to erect a septum. The reasons for this are unclear, since the parish had no history of Puritanism, and seems to have complied with the other ecclesiastical policies of the period. However, it is clear that the great majority of Warwickshire parishes had accepted the "innovation" of altar rails by the end of the 1630s.

There can be no doubt that Laudianism made an impact at the level of the parishes in Warwickshire. Many of the policies promoted in the metropolitan visitation, and reinforced by the actions of the bishops after 1635, were implemented in those parishes for which records survive. This demonstrates that the system of ecclesiastical discipline was reasonably efficient when it was used to impose reforms over a sustained period. The system was probably most effective at regulating the maintenance and contents of churches, which could be supervised by official inspections. The increase in the number of these inspections after 1635 may explain the widespread introduction of reforms in this period.

It is reasonable to assume that the Laudian regime brought some benefits to the local church. The physical condition of many parish churches was greatly improved. Equally, the acquisition of new Prayer Books and surplices, and the renewed emphasis on the service of communion, may well have enhanced the quality of services in the

region. However, it is likely that these improvements were offset by problems in certain parishes. In some cases, it appears that parishes were unable to meet the financial cost of the reforms: at Barcheston, for example, the churchwardens' accounts were in debt by over £2 in 1639.<sup>139</sup> In other cases, the raising of levies led to conflict between the clergy and their congregations. This occurred at Southam, where the rector was forced to obtain orders from the consistory court to enforce the payment of levies in 1632 and 1638.<sup>140</sup>

In general, the accounts from the parishes of Warwickshire show that most congregations were prepared to implement Laudian policies in the 1630s. This suggests that these policies were at least acceptable to the majority of the population. However, it is impossible to determine whether the reforms enjoyed genuine support in the region. In the majority of cases, it is likely that the churchwardens enacted them under pressure from the diocesan authorities. This view is supported by the fact that only the parish of Southam, where the minister was a committed High Churchman, implemented a consistent policy of spending on ceremonial artefacts throughout the early Stuart period.<sup>141</sup> The accounts from the other parishes indicate that they complied with the prevailing policies of different periods.

Moreover, it appears that certain parishes actually delayed the implementation of Laudian policies, although they eventually complied. This was particularly evident with regard to the installation of altar rails. During the visitation of the archdeaconry

of Coventry in 1636, the churchwardens of Polesworth were criticised for "not providing a sufficient co[m]munion table and a raile as required".<sup>141</sup> This problem was not mentioned in the subsequent visitation in 1639, which may indicate that the situation had been rectified. The churchwardens' accounts from Fillongley and Kenilworth reveal that they did not purchase a septum until 1637; at Nether Whitacre, a septum was not erected until 1638.<sup>142</sup> In other cases, it appears that the courts had to be used to ensure that altar rails were set up. In 1635, the churchwardens of St Nicholas' in Warwick were required to send a certificate to Worcester to prove "that the Communion Table was done".<sup>143</sup>

The opposition to altar rails was confirmed by the events of the early 1640s, when the collapse of Laudianism was followed by a Puritan backlash against the "innovations" of the preceding decade. In 1641 the parish account from Kingsbury recorded a payment for "benchinge the Chancell & takeinge upp the Rayles that were about the Comunion Table".<sup>144</sup> It is clear from other sources that altar rails were destroyed in parishes across the region in the same period. The septum in the church of Holy Trinity in Coventry was removed in 1641.<sup>145</sup> Anna Temple of Frankton, writing to her daughter in Sussex in January 1642, described how "Alters begin to goe down apace & railles in many places".<sup>146</sup>

The destruction of Laudian "innovations" after 1640 reflected a major weakness in the policies of the 1630s. While the system of visitations was effective at reforming the condition of parish churches, it was much less successful at restricting the activity of



the Puritan community. Despite the attempt to suppress nonconformity after 1635, there is no evidence that Puritan dissent was less common in this period. Only one nonconformist minister, Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall, was removed from his living during the decade. At least four others, who were presented between 1635 and 1636, were still active in the region at the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>147</sup> To a large extent, this failure reflected the weaknesses of the disciplinary system in dealing with determined Puritans, which were described in Chapter One.

As well as failing to suppress nonconformity, the authorities were unable to restrict "godly" preaching in the 1630s. The attempt to limit the availability of sermons by fixing the times of Sunday services was ineffective. The diary of the Warwick schoolmaster, Thomas Dugard, reveals that it was possible to hear two or three Sunday sermons in Warwick and its vicinity throughout the 1630s.<sup>148</sup> At least two Sunday sermons were available in Coventry in the period after 1635, as well as lectures on weekdays.<sup>149</sup> Equally, the attempt to prevent people from "gadding" to hear Puritan preachers was largely unsuccessful. It is clear from contemporary accounts that Puritan sermons continued to attract large congregations in Warwick, Birmingham and Nuneaton throughout the decade, mostly from parishes lying outside these towns.<sup>150</sup>

Clearly, the policies of the Laudian period did little to suppress the Puritan movement in Warwickshire. However, the "godly" community was well aware of the intentions of the authorities during the 1630s. Although it was largely ineffective, the prosecution of

nonconformists distressed the region's Puritans, and convinced them that the cause of "godly religion" was under attack. This fear was confirmed by the attempt to restrict preaching after 1635, despite its limited impact. At the same time, the renewed emphasis on ceremonial worship in the local church, and particularly the introduction of altar rails in parish churches, encouraged the belief that the bishops were imposing "formalism" and superstition in the county. The impact of these policies on the Puritan clergy, and their reaction to them, is discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three: The Puritan Clergy of Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"Persecution is the bellows of the Gospel, blowing every sparke into a flame."

Samuel Clarke, 1642 '

Naturally, the people affected most directly by the changes in religious policy in early Stuart Warwickshire were the clergy. Within this group, it is equally clear that those most threatened by the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s were the county's Puritan ministers. It is essential, therefore, to understand the attitudes of these ministers. The first section of this chapter sets out the beliefs of the region's Puritan clergy. It argues that they espoused a highly distinctive and comprehensive view of religion and life, which must be understood as a coherent whole. Their view of the world was utterly incompatible with the episcopal policies which were introduced during the 1630s. Moreover, the very nature of their beliefs made them a highly resilient group whom it was dangerous to antagonise.

The second section examines the activities of the region's Puritan ministers between 1603 and 1640. It also attempts to determine the prevalence of their ideas among the clergy as a whole. The third section describes the experience of the Puritan clergy during the 1630s. It argues that many "godly" ministers felt alienated from the

established church in this period, and were deeply apprehensive about the direction of ecclesiastical policies, both within the county and outside. However, despite their anxieties, the diocesan authorities were largely ineffective at suppressing their activities. Section four presents a brief case-study of Samuel Clarke, the minister of Alcester, whose career epitomised the experiences of the region's Puritan clergy in the early Stuart period.

#### 1) The Religion of the Puritan Clergy

The word "Puritan" was used in various ways in seventeenth-century Warwickshire, as in the rest of England.<sup>2</sup> It was frequently uttered as an insult, as was the case in Pillerton Priors in 1615, when a parishioner derided the curate as a "Puritan knave".<sup>3</sup> But in some cases the word had a positive connotation. In 1631, for example, a preacher in Nuneaton told his audience that "every man should be content to dy a puritan".<sup>4</sup> In 1647 John Bryan, the vicar of Holy Trinity in Coventry, referred approvingly to "Puritans and Patriots".<sup>5</sup> In this chapter the words "Puritan" and "godly" are used to describe a distinctive grouping within the county clergy, whose members shared a particular set of beliefs and a characteristic kind of ministry.

It should be stated that the men in this party were not in complete agreement. Not all of them were nonconformists. Some moderates, such as John Burges of Sutton Coldfield, regretted the inclusion of

certain ceremonies in the Book of Common Prayer but believed that they should be observed for the sake of religious harmony.<sup>6</sup> Others, such as Humphrey Fenn of Coventry, dismissed the ceremonies as a form of ungodly "bondage" which should be broken "in defence of Christian liberty".<sup>7</sup> But these differences were largely a matter of degree. The ministers who can be described as "Puritan" were broadly united by their particular concept of the Protestant Religion. This amounted to a highly distinctive and comprehensive view of the world.

The opinions of the region's Puritan clergy were most clearly expressed in their sermons. These have been preserved in a number of sources, but perhaps the best is the collection of notebooks written by Richard Newdigate, the squire of Arbury Hall near Nuneaton. Newdigate was a member of the "godly" community, and later an active supporter of parliament during the civil war.<sup>8</sup> Between 1626 and 1631 he attended numerous sermons in the north of the county, and also heard preachers in Warwick and its environs in the early 1630s. He kept careful notes on the preachers that he heard, the majority of whom can be identified as Puritans.<sup>9</sup> As well as the notes in Newdigate's journals, a number of sermons and treatises were published by local Puritan churchmen between 1603 and 1642. Taken together, these sources provide a consistent and reliable account of the beliefs of the Puritan clergy throughout the early Stuart period.

It is clear from Newdigate's journals that the godly clergy saw their first duty as preaching itself. In February 1630 Newdigate noted the assertion by Richard Vines, the minister of Weddington and Caldecot, that godly sermons were the greatest "riches of Gods mercy".<sup>10</sup> Later

that year he heard Josiah Packwood, a regular lecturer at Nuneaton, preach a series of four sermons devoted to the same idea. Packwood argued that preaching had been the original mission of the church and insisted that it should continue to be the "weighty worke" of all God's faithful servants.<sup>11</sup> More dramatically, an unnamed preacher at Astley declared that the clergy would have the "bloud of sinners" on their hands if "they preach not the gospel".<sup>12</sup>

The first aim of preaching was to direct individuals away from sinfulness and towards salvation. It was the preacher's task to call on his listeners to examine their spiritual condition, and to understand the utter degradation of an unredeemed soul. This was a bitter and painful experience, but one necessary for true repentance and the hope of salvation. A typical observation, repeated in different forms throughout Newdigate's journals, was that "None can have a drame of joy without a pound of grief".<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Richard Vines remarked that "if we cannot know ourselves to be miserable we canot know God to be mercifull".<sup>14</sup> The way to redemption was to face up to one's innate sinfulness and then surrender to God's grace. This process of confrontation and repentance was frequently described as a "battle" for the soul.

As an incentive to join this battle, the godly preacher emphasised the awful consequences of an unredeemed life. Sinners could never escape God's knowledge of their transgressions, even if they were hidden from the world; nor could they escape the judgment of Hell without going through the pain of true repentance. In 1626 Newdigate

recorded this typical comment from Francis Bacon, the minister of Astley:

"If we weep not here we shall gnash our teeth hereafter too late. Without repentance we all perish, without weeping & mourning we cannot repent ... Noe member of soule or body [is] mortified without paine." <sup>15</sup>

Another preacher at Astley, recorded a few pages later, reminded his listeners that "by every sinne we are liable to execution and hell fire. Lett all those [that] forgett God take heed lest God teare them in pieces".<sup>16</sup>

While the cost of an unredeemed life was torment in Hell, the reward for a truly penitent sinner was prosperity in this world and glory in the next. The juxtaposition of these two conditions was a commonplace in Puritan preaching. In 1631 Josiah Packwood first described the wretchedness of the condemned soul then evoked the "estate of the child of God", who would receive "grace here and glory hereafter". As Packwood himself acknowledged, the aim of such preaching was to provoke a state of anxiety in the mind of the listener, who was thereby impelled to "examine himself whether God be his father or noe".<sup>17</sup> This experience of distress was the first step towards repentance.

Such appeals to individuals to examine themselves, and to endure the pain of repentance, made Puritan preaching highly personal. It was in this context that the doctrines of predestination and assurance assumed particular importance in the Puritan world-view. In particular, the belief that individuals could be "assured" of their

salvation gave comfort to those called by the preacher to examine their souls. This benefit was described by Francis Bacon in 1626:

"That we know we are elected [is] a blessing deserving praise & thanks to God, whose immutable decree it is ... It gives us comfort in time of temptation, when we ly groning under ye burden of our sinns." <sup>18</sup>

The doctrine of assurance was repeatedly emphasised in the godly sermons attended by Newdigate. Although it was not exclusive to the Puritan clergy, there can be little doubt that it was a central theme in their preaching, and a natural consequence of their personal approach towards religion.

Another consequence of the Puritan emphasis on personal religion was an extremely sceptical attitude towards external forms of worship. The godly preachers recorded in Newdigate's journals were all keen to denounce "formalism", or the "mere outward observance" of religion, which was inadequate without the inner experience of God's grace.<sup>19</sup> This was at the heart of their condemnation of idolatry, which was another recurrent theme. While this outlook was not necessarily in conflict with the prescribed rituals of the church, it is clear that these rituals were far less important to Puritan ministers than to other members of the clergy. Here again the doctrine of predestination was important: the individual was saved by the "immutable decree" of God rather than the formal practices of the church.

A natural extension of the attack on formalism was the belief that Christians should carry their religion into every aspect of their lives, rather than confining it to churchgoing. This was done by



cultivating a Christian demeanour, or "conversation", in which one's everyday thoughts were directed to God and one's actions were regulated by His Laws. Godly sermons contained copious advice on how to practise such a life. At a spiritual level, Christians were enjoined to pray frequently and read the Bible with diligence. At a practical level, they were required to observe strict moral precepts, the most important of which were the Ten Commandments. Naturally, the achievement of a truly religious conversation was regarded as a sign of election.

The Laws of God did not only apply to the elect, however, but were binding on society as a whole. Puritan preachers regarded it as their duty to declare these Laws to the unredeemed mass of the population, as well as to "true Christians". Josiah Packwood spelt out this obligation in 1630:

"Wee are injoined ... to tell Judah of their sins & Israell of their transgressions; wee are to doe our dutys to denounce Gods judgements against sinns, to lay open & display his sweete mercies to penitent sinners." <sup>20</sup>

Since most of the world was drenched in sin, Puritan sermons were replete with such denunciations. It was inevitable that preaching of this kind would be unpopular with the majority, especially when it involved the condemnation of drinking and festivities; and the Puritan clergy often felt themselves to be in conflict with a godless society. This conflict was commonly described as a "battle" or a "war against the world".<sup>21</sup>

The sins most frequently denounced were drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking. The first of these was undoubtedly a widespread problem,

which was also associated with other undesirable activities such as fighting, blasphemy and absence from church. The second reflected the godly preachers' uncompromising adherence to the Ten Commandments. Other practices often condemned were dancing, music-making and all forms of "superstitious" festivals, the most important of which were village wakes and May Games. Here the emphasis was on both the social consequences and the irreligious nature of such events: they were believed to encourage disorders and to have pagan and "idolatrous" overtones.<sup>22</sup>

Alongside the conflict with an impious society, the godly clergy were faced with the challenge of Catholicism.<sup>23</sup> This was not, of course, a challenge unique to the county's Puritan ministers; but it was one that they took up with particular vigour. They regarded Catholicism as the most extreme and damnable version of formalism, practically inseparable from idolatry. As such, it was decried as an encouragement to irreligion and loose living throughout the sermons in Newdigate's notes.<sup>24</sup> At a more exalted level, Catholics were presented as allies of the Devil in his efforts to destroy the Protestant Church. In the words of one godly preacher, they were the great "enemies of God's people",<sup>25</sup>

The struggle against popery was given further impetus by speculations about the Last Judgment, which was to be accompanied by the destruction of the Roman Church. Again, this idea was not confined to the Puritan clergy. The Second Coming was anticipated widely in England during the reign of James I, and attracted the attention of both Puritan and High Church divines.<sup>26</sup> It was the

subject of heightened expectation following the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. However, it was natural for Puritan preachers to place particular emphasis on the coming apocalypse, given their acute concern with the struggle against Catholicism. Thus the Puritan clergy were the most zealous proponents of eschatological theories throughout the early Stuart period, both in Warwickshire and the country as a whole.

One of the most vivid sermons on the Last Judgment was delivered by Samuel Armstone, a preacher heard by Newdigate at Nuneaton in 1626. Armstone enumerated the various signs of the coming "death of the world", including war and famine abroad and the recent activities of the Jesuits in England. He enjoined his listeners to ready themselves for the imminent apocalypse: "was ever the time soe neare, the times worse, & we lesse prepared?"<sup>27</sup> A decade later, this theme was developed by Ephraim Huitt, the minister of Wroxall, in his exhaustive treatise on the Book of Daniel. Huitt calculated that the End would take place in 1650. It would begin with the conversion of the Jews, and culminate with the fall of "the Romane Tyrant into the streams of fire and brimstone".<sup>28</sup>

Taken together, the ideas of the Puritan clergy can be seen as a consistent and comprehensive system of beliefs. This system operated at three levels. On the first level was the individual, whom the godly preacher encouraged to repent and seek salvation. On the second was the unredeemed mass of the population, which he rebuked and attempted to bring under the Law of God. On the third level was the apocalyptic struggle between "God's people" and the Catholic

Church, which was bound up with the military confrontation between the Protestant and Catholic powers in Europe. Each of these levels was intimately connected, and the whole was contained in the concept of "godly religion". Thus the Puritan clergy espoused a dynamic and all-encompassing view of the world, extending from the innermost feelings of individuals to the greatest political events.

The completeness of this vision, together with its impressive clarity, instilled confidence and determination in the Puritan clergy. It also gave them a distinct identity within the established church. This was recognised by the preachers in Newdigate's journals, who described their own brand of ministry as "zealous" or "painful". These men were keen to distinguish themselves from other, less earnest members of the clergy, whom they referred to as "formalists", "time-servers" or "dumb idolls". The ties between the region's Puritan ministers were reinforced by established circuits of preaching and shared contacts among the laity, which are examined in section two.

It was common for the preachers heard by Newdigate to describe this network of "painful" ministers and congregations as the "church". This tendency was acknowledged in 1631 by John Burges, the vicar of Sutton Coldfield, who commented that Puritan ministers "doe commonly call any small company ... the Church".<sup>29</sup> The godly "church" was distinct from the formal edifice of the Church of England, which was regarded as an important but essentially man-made institution. This concept allowed the Puritan clergy to regard themselves as the "true ministers" of God. It also provided a justification for defying the

bishops when their actions appeared to undermine the true "church". On the whole, such confrontations were avoided before the 1630s by the detached attitude of the diocesan authorities, despite the refusal of certain ministers to conform to disputed ceremonies.

As well as providing a unifying concept of the godly "church", the Puritan system of beliefs promoted the idea of conflict. Conflict pervaded the three levels of the Puritan world-view. The individual was encouraged to battle with personal sin; the godly community was at war with the rest of society; and God's church was involved in the great struggle to overthrow the Roman Antichrist. Accordingly, the sermons of the "painful" clergy were replete with images of confrontation. Ephraim Huitt described the practice of godly religion as "a continuall warfare, a daily fighting with inward fears and outward troubles".<sup>30</sup> To Samuel Clarke, the minister of Alcester, the Christian life was a perpetual "warre with the world", in which the elect were constantly confronted with "the fire of affliction".<sup>31</sup>

The Puritan clergy occupied a pivotal role at each level of the religious conflict. In their sermons they called on individuals to confront and repudiate their sins. They implored society to accept the Laws of God. They were the vanguard in the struggle against the Antichrist. As a consequence, Puritan ministers regarded themselves as a constantly embattled minority, resisting the massed forces of sin, immorality and the Devil. This outlook was exemplified by Samuel Clarke, who asserted that the "painful" clergy were "set up by God in a speciall manner to oppose and beat downe the kingdome of sinne". As a result of their exalted status, they were "singled out

by the Devill and his instruments as the principall Buts against which the inveanomed Arrowes of their malicious hearts are most directed".<sup>32</sup>

The inevitable consequence of this attitude was an expectation, even a desire, to face difficulties and persecution. This tendency was expressed most candidly by Robert Harris, the minister of Hanwell in Oxfordshire. Harris was employed as a lecturer at Stratford between 1629 and 1631; he maintained his connection with Warwickshire during the 1630s, serving as family chaplain to the Lucys of Charlecote. In 1631 he published The Way to True Happinesse, a collection of sermons on the beautitudes, the last of which dealt with the obligations of the clergy. In particular, it concentrated on the tasks of "preaching and persecution", which Harris believed to be inseparable. "It is not possible", he wrote, "for a man to be a true Preacher of Gods word and not be persecuted".<sup>33</sup>

Harris enumerated three reasons for this persecution, which corresponded to the three levels of conflict in the Puritan world-view. The first was that God tested his ministers by setting them trials, which sharpened their personal faith. The second was the "utter antipathy" which existed between the Lord's servants and society at large: "for the Ministry is divine and holy, so the world and it can no better agree than light and darknesse". Thirdly, true preachers were singled out for attack by the Devil and his instruments as part of his wider effort to destroy God's church:

"It is of Satan that Gods Ministers are so persecuted, for he knowes if the shepheard be smitten, the sheep must be scattered ... if the starres be once pulled down from heaven, his kingdome ... will thereupon be advanced." <sup>34</sup>

In the light of these reasons, Harris argued that persecution should be embraced by the faithful preacher as a sign of his calling. It was a natural "twin" to the godly ministry.

This conviction had clear implications for any attempt by the bishops to suppress the activities of the Puritan clergy. Far from acting as a deterrent, persecution fitted naturally into their image of the world, which it even helped to reinforce. This fact was acknowledged within the godly community itself. In 1631 John Burges of Sutton Coldfield, a moderate Puritan who hoped for compromise on both sides, expressed his belief that persecution was counter-productive:

"Nor doe I conceive that pressing the utmost rigour of Lawes against all that refuse Conformitie is the way to unite us; because this is so farre from altering their judgement that it rather confirms it, and will adde the glory of suffering for ... the Good Cause." <sup>35</sup>

Burges' argument was directed at attempts to suppress overt nonconformity, such as the refusal of certain ministers to wear the surplice, but it applied equally well to restrictions on preaching and other aspects of the godly life.

Thus it is clear that the Puritan clergy were well prepared to face opposition in the early Stuart period. In a sense they were predisposed to confrontation by their view of the world. This meant that any attempt by the bishops to undermine the "godly church", however half-hearted or limited in practice, was bound to provoke passionate resistance, and to place the authorities on the wrong side

of the conflict which was at the heart of the Puritan ministry. This was precisely the situation which arose during the 1630s, when the priorities of the diocesan authorities seemed to challenge the whole basis of "godly religion". The dangers of challenging the Puritan clergy were compounded by the highly organised and extensive nature of their ministry, which is considered in the following section.

## 2) The Puritan Ministry

The godly clergy of Warwickshire were highly organised at the time of the accession of James I. Under the leadership of Thomas Cartwright they had developed a ministry with its own distinctive structure; and although the more radical aspects of this structure, such as the Presbyterian system of elders and regional classes, had been suppressed during the 1590s, important elements survived into the early Stuart period. Puritan activities were concentrated in the county's major towns, particularly Coventry and Warwick, which had been the centres of the Presbyterian movement under Elizabeth.<sup>36</sup> These towns continued to serve as meeting places for the godly ministers of surrounding parishes, and as centres in a system of semi-independent preaching circuits.

At the hub of the Puritan ministry were the town lectureships.<sup>37</sup> The most important of these were in Coventry. Here the lecturers were appointed and paid by the corporation, who thereby asserted their independence in matters of religion. In 1608 the aldermen restored



the decayed church of St John's and established a weekly lecture there, providing a platform for John Oxenbridge, the deprived rector of Southam and a veteran of the Presbyterian movement.<sup>38</sup> By the mid-1620s lectures were in place in the town on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays; and the preachers employed included Humphrey Fenn, another deprived minister who had attended the Presbyterian "synod" of 1588.<sup>39</sup> In addition to these regular preachers, the town's pulpits provided a venue for "painful" ministers from neighbouring parishes, including Tristram Diamond of Foleshill.<sup>40</sup>

Similar arrangements were in place in the south of the county. In 1611 the corporation of Warwick set up a lectureship in St Mary's, employing the moderate Puritan preacher, Richard Roe.<sup>41</sup> This position was subsequently held by another preacher with Puritan sympathies, Thomas Spencer, as well as the outspoken nonconformist, Samuel Clarke.<sup>42</sup> A lectureship was established by the town council at Stratford in 1612. This was held by a succession of Puritan ministers during the 1620s and 1630s, including Thomas Wilson, Robert Harris and William Whateley, the famous "roaring boy" of Banbury.<sup>43</sup> In both towns the lectureships appear to have been free from episcopal interference, although Bishop Thornborough was aware that they were potential centres of nonconformity. He remarked in his annual report to Laud in 1637 that his diocese was "less troubled with Nonconformists since Mr Whatley gave over his Lecture at Stratford".<sup>44</sup>

In towns without corporations, such as Birmingham and Nuneaton, lectureships were supported by local families. In 1625 a weekly

lecture was established in Birmingham by Hester Jennens, a member of a successful ironmongering family, who pledged £10 per annum towards the maintenance of a "godly" preacher. She expressed her desire that others in the town would contribute towards similar foundations, and thereby "stirr up the hearts of all good Christians, mayntyning the good of the Church and gayninge soules to heaven".<sup>45</sup> The lectureship attracted the services of several "painful" preachers from the north of the county, including John Burges and Jeremiah Slater. The patron of the lecture at Nuneaton is unknown. It appears from Newdigate's journals that Josiah Packwood was preaching lectures in the town during the 1620s.<sup>46</sup> The lectureship was definitely taken by Richard Vines, the minister of Weddington and Caldecot, during the 1630s.<sup>47</sup>

The towns with lectureships provided a centre for the hearing and discussion of godly sermons, and an opportunity for informal meetings among the clergy. Thomas Hall of Kings Norton was a regular attender at the lecture in Birmingham during the 1620s, and used it to maintain contacts with other ministers in the town.<sup>48</sup> The lecture at Warwick attracted godly churchmen from neighbouring parishes during the 1630s, including prominent nonconformists such as Ephraim Huitt and John Bryan.<sup>49</sup> In addition to these local gatherings, some ministers travelled considerable distances to attend important lectures. Thomas Wilson of Stratford was a frequent visitor to Warwick during the 1630s.<sup>50</sup> In the same period, Samuel Clarke, the minister of Alcester, made regular journeys to Nuneaton to hear Richard Vines.<sup>51</sup>

This mobile approach to the ministry was typical of the Puritan clergy. Since they regarded themselves as a distinct group within the established church, and were aware that many parishes were not blessed with "painful" preachers, they set out to reach congregations outside the boundaries of their own livings. The town lectureships provided an important opportunity for this. Another approach was to encourage people to "gad" from their own parishes to hear godly sermons in neighbouring churches. The biographer of Thomas Hall described how "the godly flocked from all Parts round about" to hear him preach at Mosley during the 1630s.<sup>52</sup> Samuel Clarke recalled that "many resorted ... from places adjacent" to hear Richard Vines preach at Weddington in the same period.<sup>53</sup>

As well as encouraging outsiders to attend their sermons, *Puritan ministers commonly preached* in the parishes of other clergy. In 1613 the churchwardens of St Nicholas' in Warwick purchased a book "to sett down the names of strange preachers" visiting their parish.<sup>54</sup> It is clear from the diary of Thomas Dugard, the town schoolmaster, that Warwick remained a centre of "godly" preaching throughout the reign of Charles I.<sup>55</sup> In 1633, for example, Dugard heard at least eight Puritan ministers preach in the town. These included four known nonconformists: Samuel Clarke, John Bryan, William Overton of Budbrooke and Simon Moore of Frankton.<sup>56</sup> Most of the preachers were clergy from neighbouring parishes, but two came from other parts of the county. These were John Burges of Sutton Coldfield and James Nalton, the Puritan vicar of Rugby.<sup>57</sup>

The activity of "stranger preachers" was recorded in the records of many other Warwickshire parishes. The churchwardens' accounts from Kenilworth recorded visits from unnamed preachers throughout the 1620s.<sup>58</sup> Similar entries were made in the accounts of Berkswell, Kingsbury and Kineton.<sup>59</sup> Occasionally, ministers were presented to the courts for allowing unlicensed preachers to deliver sermons from their pulpits. This happened at Lapworth in 1613, Luddington in 1614, and Oxhill in 1616.<sup>60</sup> A similar incident led to the prosecution of the churchwardens of Foleshill in Lichfield consistory court in 1618.<sup>61</sup> However, it seems that the majority of visiting preachers were licensed members of the local clergy, whose activities were accepted by the authorities.

It was a natural extension of the travelling ministry for the Puritan clergy to organise themselves into regular preaching circuits, taking turns to expound the Gospel in each others' parishes. This was probably the case with the ministers recorded in Newdigate's journals between 1626 and 1631, who appeared at various times in the pulpits of Nuneaton and Astley.<sup>62</sup> The diary of Thomas Dugard reveals that a similar arrangement was in place in the vicinity of Warwick during the 1630s, involving the clergy of several neighbouring parishes. Dugard's diary also describes a round of private meetings between the godly ministers in the area, at which various sermons were discussed.<sup>63</sup>

Clearly, the survival of this kind of ministry depended on the provision of "painful" churchmen in country parishes as well as the towns. Here the patronage of the local gentry was crucial, as the

godly clergy recognised. Preaching in Warwick in 1631, Samuel Clarke called on "all in abilitie to contribute to the plantacon of ministers in dry places".<sup>64</sup> Such appeals were not always heeded, and many patrons appear to have taken little care in the appointment of clergy to the livings at their disposal. But some families, such as the Newdigates, the Adderlys of Weddington and the Temples of Frankton, made a conspicuous effort to install "painful" ministers in local parishes. The most celebrated patron of this kind was the second Lord Brooke, who maintained godly ministers in his two parishes of Alcester and Knowle.<sup>65</sup>

Godly ministers often enjoyed close personal ties with their patrons, and assumed the role of family chaplains, teachers and spiritual advisors. Some even married into the families that they served: this was the case with Richard Vines, who married the daughter of Thomas Adderley. The closeness between the Puritan clergy and their patrons is illustrated by the correspondence of Simon Moore, the curate of Frankton, with members of the Temple family. In 1632 Moore wrote to Mary Busbridge, the daughter of his patron, now living with her husband in Sussex:

"I have not bin unmindfull of you in my best thoughts, in my poore worthles prayers: I desire your spirituall progress to full holines & I pray God you may prosper & be in health as your soule prospereth ... with many hearty thanks to you for your unfayned love [in] so many wayes & at all times expressed to me & mine." <sup>66</sup>

A similar friendship appears to have formed between Samuel Clarke and his patron, the second Lord Brooke, with whom he shared "an intimacy of affection and familiarity of converse".<sup>67</sup>

The ties between the Puritan clergy and their patrons, and their association with other members of the gentry, formed the basis of the "godly" community. Thomas Dugard described a typical network of relationships in his diary of the 1630s. The preachers in Dugard's circle enjoyed regular contact with the gentry of Warwick, including Lord Brooke and Sir Thomas Puckering. Outside the town, they were connected with Sir Simon Archer, the Burgoynes of Wroxall and the Lucys of Charlecote.<sup>69</sup> The gentry were also connected with "godly" ministers outside the county. John Ley, the Puritan sub-dean of Chester, enjoyed the friendship of the Archer family during the 1630s, and preached the funeral sermon of Sir Simon's son in 1643.<sup>70</sup> Lord Brooke frequently entertained ministers from Staffordshire and Oxfordshire at Warwick castle, bringing together the "godly" members of the local clergy with their fellows from other parts of the Midlands.<sup>71</sup>

Clearly, the Puritan clergy of early Stuart Warwickshire maintained the high degree of organisation which they had enjoyed during the reign of Elizabeth. It also seems that they continued the tradition of nonconformity. In 1606 a petition was sent to James I from "the ministers of the gospell in the Countie of Warwick", expressing their concern about the rituals prescribed in the new canons of 1604. The petitioners claimed that as many as 27 local ministers felt unable to obey the canons. They asserted that the stricter enforcement of indifferent ceremonies placed an intolerable burden on the consciences of these men. Moreover, they feared that the ceremonies themselves would foster ignorance and superstition, encouraging the

region's Catholic minority to "growe presumptuous and multiply amongst us".<sup>71</sup>

Despite the impact of the 1604 canons, it appears that clerical nonconformity remained a problem in Warwickshire throughout the reign of James I. There is evidence that the eucharist was commonly administered to non-kneelers in Coventry until the 1620s.<sup>72</sup> In 1617 Abraham Bowtell, the vicar of Burton Hastings, admitted to Lichfield consistory court that he had performed uncanonical baptisms and administered the Communion "to one or two persons sitting".<sup>73</sup> In the episcopal visitation of the same year, Ralph Sherrat of Arley was presented because he "weareth not the surplisse nor alwaies useth the signe of the cross".<sup>74</sup> Irregularities of this kind were not confined to the north of the county: the ministers of Stratford, Haseley and Hatton were presented for nonconformity to the diocesan courts at Worcester during the same period.<sup>75</sup>

Naturally, the renewed emphasis on uniformity during the reign of Charles I highlighted the extent of clerical nonconformity in the region. Between 1635 and 1639 at least seven ministers were threatened with prosecutions for nonconformity in the ecclesiastical courts.<sup>76</sup> One of them, Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall, fled to New England in 1639 to escape the proceedings against him.<sup>77</sup> It is likely that five other local ministers, who refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity in 1662, were also nonconformists during the 1630s. These were Josiah Packwood, John Bryan of Barford, Anthony Burges of Sutton Coldfield, Tristram Diamond of Foleshill and William Overton of Budbrooke.<sup>78</sup>

The surviving evidence of clerical nonconformity indicates the extent of the Puritan movement in the local church. It is likely, however, that the evidence under-estimates the level of support for "godly religion" among the clergy. The apparatus of diocesan discipline was far from perfect, and many nonconformists probably slipped through the net. Moreover, many churchmen may have sympathised with Puritan ideas but conformed to the canons of the church: the opinions of such men were unlikely to be recorded in the available sources. But despite these problems, it is possible to speculate on the prevalence of Puritan sentiments among the local clergy, based on a range of surviving material.

Perhaps the most valuable source is the Warwickshire Ministers Testimony, a petition of the local clergy published in 1648. The Testimony, which was organised by John Bryan and the godly ministers of Coventry, affirmed support for the "Trueth of Jesus Christ and our Solemn League and Covenant".<sup>79</sup> The signatories represented parishes from the archdeaconry of Coventry and the diocese of Worcester: they included men from the northern towns of Birmingham, Tanworth and Kings Norton, and southern communities such as Warwick, Stratford and Alcester. The document was signed by a total of forty-three ministers, amounting to one fifth of the region's clergy.

Eight of the ministers who subscribed to the Testimony had arrived in the county in the wake of the civil war. Three of them, Alexander Bean, Obadiah Grew and Nicholas Clarke, had replaced sequestered royalists.<sup>80</sup> However, the addition of these newcomers was balanced by the absence of a number of Puritan churchmen who had been active



in Warwickshire during the 1630s. Samuel Clarke, Richard Vines and James Nalton of Rugby obtained new livings outside the region before 1648, and were therefore not represented in the Testimony. Three other Puritan divines, Anthony Burges of Sutton Coldfield, Tristram Diamond of Foleshill and John Gilpin of Knowle, also failed to sign the Testimony for some reason.

The Testimony shows that around 20% of the Warwickshire clergy were happy to embrace Presbyterianism following the collapse of the Church of England. It should be stated, of course, that most of these men were not convinced enemies of the established church: only a few of them were ejected in 1662, and many more accepted the Act of Uniformity.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the support for Bryan's petition demonstrates that the ideals of "godly religion" appealed to a considerable section of the local clergy. The Testimony, unlike the Act of Uniformity, was a voluntary statement of belief: there is no reason to suspect that any of the ministers who affirmed it did so in bad faith, or out of fear of losing their benefices.

The impression that many conformist ministers were sympathetic to Puritan ideas can be confirmed by other sources. John Malin, the minister of Chilvers Coton between 1621 and 1638, was one of the preachers heard frequently by Richard Newdigate. There is nothing to suggest that Malin was a nonconformist: he was never presented to the courts during the 1630s, though he was mentioned in the episcopal visitation of 1636 because of a wrangle over the collection of parish dues.<sup>92</sup> However, it is clear from Newdigate's journals that Malin embraced many of the principles of "godly religion". For example,

his sermons emphasised the importance of personal sin and the pain of repentance:

"First embrace godlinesse. Repent and believe ... Double your repentance, renew your decree. The more wee washe our soules with tears of repentance the more pure shall they be in the eyes of God." <sup>633</sup>

Malin was also a zealous reprover of immorality, especially drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking.<sup>634</sup> Above all, he was keen to denounce idolatry and religious formalism, which he described as "inwardly foule & outwardly faire".<sup>635</sup>

Another conformist churchman who supported the ideals of "godly religion" was Thomas Spencer, the vicar of Budbrooke between 1635 and 1670. Like John Malin, Spencer was untroubled by the authorities during the reign of Charles I. He subscribed to the Ministers' Testimony of 1648, and later accepted the Act of Uniformity. In 1643 Spencer composed a biography of Lord Brooke, in which he expressed an obvious preference for a Puritan style of religion. He lauded Brooke as "a great frequenter of sermons" and a "deare Foster-Father to many Ministers and School-Masters", including men who refused to conform to the canons of the established church. He asserted that the Caroline bishops took Catholics as their "familiar friends", and denounced the royalist cause as crypto-papist.<sup>636</sup>

John Trapp, the schoolmaster of Stratford between 1624 and 1665, was another conformist divine with distinctly Puritan sympathies. He was one of the men who signed the Testimony of 1648 and later conformed to the Restoration church. In 1641 he published a treatise, The True Treasure, which presented a robust statement of the principles of

"godly religion". Trapp derided "formalism" and exalted the role of the "painful" preacher. He asserted that preachers were the special messengers of God: they were called to denounce superstition and immorality, and to awaken sinners from "the dead lethargy whereunto Satan and an evill custime hath cast them". As such, they were "co-workers with God, and fellow labourers with the Angels, in the matter of mans salvation".<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting example of a conformist minister with Puritan leanings was Richard Vennour, the vicar of St Mary's in Warwick between 1639 and 1662. Again, Vennour was a signatory to the Testimony of 1648 who later accepted the Act of Uniformity. In 1660 he delivered a speech in St Mary's explaining his decision to return to the Book of Common Prayer. In this he identified two "great enemies" of religion. One was the activity of over-zealous reformers who denigrated all forms of external worship; the other was the danger of "formalism", promoted by certain ungodly elements within the established church:

"These people do by the Book of the Common-Prayer as the Children of Israel did by the brasen Serpent ... For God hath not given us this book, but the holy Scriptures to build our faith, and to lay upon them the foundation of our salvation." <sup>28</sup>

Vennour's support for a Bible-based ministry, centred on preaching but combined with an appropriate respect for external worship, was probably typical of the conformist clergy as a whole. This would explain the apparent quiescence of the majority of ministers during the 1630s, while also indicating the prevalence of Puritan ideas.

There can be little doubt that a large section of the Warwickshire clergy favoured a broadly Puritan style of religion. Although the majority of these men were conformists, it is probable that many sympathised with the position of their less compromising fellows, whom they knew through the established circuits of preaching. The contacts which existed between "moderate" and "radical" Puritans were recorded in the diary of Thomas Dugard, another signatory to the Testimony who conformed after the Restoration. Dugard enjoyed regular meetings with John Bryan and Ephraim Huitt during the 1630s. Through his association with Lord Brooke, he was also in touch with the nonconformist clergy from other parts of the country.<sup>82</sup> It is clear that the influence of Puritan thinking extended well beyond the minority of ministers who disobeyed the canons of the established church.

### 3) The Impact of Laudianism

There are few sources from the 1630s that indicate the feelings of the Warwickshire clergy during the introduction of the Laudian reforms. Newdigate's sermon notes cover the period immediately before the arrival of Bishop Wright; and no comparable manuscripts have survived from the later 1630s. Only one local minister, John Bryan of Barford, went into print during this period: his contribution was a funeral sermon which contained no references to wider ecclesiastical matters.<sup>83</sup> This situation is hardly surprising, since Laudian censorship appears to have had some impact in the

county. At least one Warwickshire minister, Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall, was prevented from publishing a book during the 1630s.<sup>91</sup>

But despite these limitations it is possible to assess the reaction of the county's Puritan clergy to the experience of High Church reform. Five "godly" ministers, including John Bryan and Richard Vines, published sermons between 1642 and 1647; and several others composed manuscripts and books in the years following the civil war.<sup>92</sup> Almost all of this material refers back to the 1630s, and most of it relates directly to Warwickshire. These accounts can be supplemented by information from surviving papers from the 1630s, including Dugard's diary and the records of the diocesan courts. The picture which emerges is that the county's godly ministers were fundamentally at odds with the ecclesiastical policies of the Laudian period, and felt that they undermined the whole basis of their ministry.

One obvious source of conflict was the emphasis on sacramental religion during the 1630s. The stricter enforcement of the Book of Common Prayer, the decoration of chancels, and the railing of communion tables had combined to promote the most formal aspects of worship in the Laudian period. This trend was roundly denounced by the Puritan clergy. In June 1642 Richard Vines remarked on "the ceremonies and usages hitherto offensive and burdensome".<sup>93</sup> In the following year Anthony Burges, who became minister of Sutton Coldfield in 1635, described the period preceding the civil war as "the times of Superstition and Altar-worship".<sup>94</sup> These sentiments were echoed by James Nalton, the minister of Rugby between 1632 and

1644, in a sermon to the House of Commons in 1646. Walton commended his audience for "pulling down that proud oppressing Prelacy, and those prelatical popish Innovations which were the props and pillars of Idolatry".<sup>96</sup>

At the heart of this opposition was the Puritan disdain for "formalism". Vines asserted that the emphasis on external worship during the 1630s had reduced religion to an empty ritual, in which the ministry of most of the clergy "hath not beene a fiery Serpent to sting the conscience", but rather a litany of "Orders and Ceremonies, and such extrinsecalls".<sup>95</sup> This point was reiterated by Burges in 1643:

"If I might have my wish, I had rather be in those times wherein the Temples were not so beautified, but the Church splendent with heavenly graces, than in the times wherein the Temples were very glorious but the Church empty of graces." <sup>97</sup>

It is a measure of the prevalence of this idea that Thomas Warmestrey of Whitchurch, a member of convocation and a future royalist, made similar allegations in 1641. Employing a familiar metaphor, he asserted that it was unacceptable to "to fill a church with congregations of dead Images and Saints, and to empty it of living Images of God".<sup>98</sup>

The apparent promotion of "formalism" during the 1630s was combined with an attempt to restrict the availability of godly sermons. Despite the limited effect of the anti-preaching measures which were introduced by the bishops and the Vicar General, the Puritan clergy had no doubt that the preaching ministry was under attack. In 1642

Richard Vines commented that sermons were "rare" during the 1630s, adding his opinion that most preachers were only interested in teaching their congregations "about Orders and Ceremonies".<sup>99</sup> This impression was confirmed by Lord Brooke, who had patronised many of the Puritan ministers of south Warwickshire during the Laudian period. According to Brooke, "the Scripture commandeth Preaching in season and out of season, but with the Pope and our Bishops All preaching is now out of Season." <sup>100</sup>

The Puritan reaction against formalism and the suppression of preaching was combined with a belief that the bishops had been indifferent to the moral reform of society during the 1630s. In part, this idea followed naturally from the allegation that the bishops had "formalised" the local church. In 1642 Richard Vines argued that the promotion of ceremonial worship had encouraged immorality and superstition, turning churchgoers into idols, "not seeing, not hearing, not having any spiritual sence".<sup>101</sup> This view was endorsed by Anthony Burges in the following year.<sup>102</sup> Thomas Hall of Kings Norton made a similar connection in his treatise against May Games in 1661. Hall asserted that the Caroline bishops had deliberately encouraged immorality in order to "fit the people the better for the swallowing of superstitious innovations".<sup>103</sup>

The Puritan clergy were encouraged in their belief that the bishops were neglecting the cause of "godly" reform by the lenient treatment of Sabbath-breaking during the 1630s. As was shown in the previous chapter, presentments to the diocesan courts for this offence declined sharply in the Laudian period. The resentment caused by

this trend was increased enormously by the imposition of the Book of Sports after 1633. The Book of Sports was a royal declaration which listed a variety of pastimes which could be lawfully enjoyed on the Lord's Day. It was originally imposed in Warwickshire in 1618, when it had been read in a number of parishes. It was re-introduced and enforced with increased vigour in 1633.

A typical reaction to the Book of Sports was described by the biographer of Thomas Hall of King's Norton. After he was pressed to read it by one of his churchwardens, Hall decided that "the people could p[ro]fane the sabbath too fast without a book to incourage them, & therefore he rejected it".<sup>104</sup> On the other side of the county, Samuel Clarke narrowly avoided an appearance at Worcester consistory court for making the same decision.<sup>105</sup> Thomas Wilson of Stratford was presented to the High Commission in 1635 for refusing to read the Book, together with other allegations of nonconformity.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the hostility that the Book provoked was a sermon preached by Thomas Dugard in 1663. According to certain members of his congregation, Dugard asserted "that the booke of Liberty which was sett forth by the late kinge was the Cause of all the war and blood shed in this nation".<sup>107</sup>

While the Puritan clergy were distressed by the lenient attitude of the Laudian authorities towards Sabbath-breaking, they were appalled by the suppression of other activities which they regarded as far less harmful. In particular, the policy of prosecuting nonconformists in the ecclesiastical courts provoked their indignation. Although relatively few local ministers were prosecuted during the 1630s, the



presentment of men such as John Gilpin and Samuel Clarke in 1635 encouraged an atmosphere of persecution. This atmosphere was fuelled by the subsequent prosecution of Thomas Wilson of Stratford in the High Commission. Perhaps the most alarming example of persecution was the treatment of Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall, who emigrated in 1639 to escape the attention of the courts. Writing four years later, Samuel Clarke lauded Huitt as a martyr to "the Tyranny of the Prelaticall party".<sup>108</sup>

It is likely that the Puritan clergy of Warwickshire were convinced of the dangers of persecution by events outside the region. In particular, the treatment of William Prynne in 1637 appears to have attracted considerable interest in the county. In September 1637 Prynne was transported by his gaolers through Coventry, where he was visited by members of the local clergy. The prisoner's cordial reception in the city later provoked an investigation by the Privy Council.<sup>109</sup> Less dramatically, the contacts between the region's godly churchmen and preachers from neighbouring areas, such as Simeon Ashe and Robert Harris, disseminated news about the persecution of ministers in other parts of the Midlands. This contributed to the general impression that the 1630s was a period of "episcopal tyranny".

Another factor which probably encouraged this impression was the Puritan concept of the righteousness of persecution. The view that the godly clergy were an embattled minority, whose status as the true messengers of God was confirmed by the opposition that they had to endure, may have led them to over-estimate the effectiveness of

"episcopal tyranny" during the 1630s. This meant that the idea of the Laudian period as an era of terrible persecution was firmly established by the 1640s, despite the relatively limited impact of ecclesiastical discipline in the region. In 1643 Anthony Burges described the 1630s as the time of "silencing ministers".<sup>110</sup> Preaching four years later, John Bryan recalled the period as an age "when the Puritan and Patriot were equally persecuted".<sup>111</sup>

It is clear that the implementation of Laudian policies in Warwickshire provoked considerable opposition during the 1630s. However, there is less evidence to support the idea that the imposition of "Arminian" theology was a major source of conflict in the local church. During the metropolitan visitation in 1635, Brent directed the clergy to avoid "contentions" in their sermons.<sup>112</sup> This order presumably referred to the exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and especially the doctrine of predestination, which had been prohibited by James I in 1622 and again by Charles I in 1629. Bishop Wright restated this policy in the Articles of his episcopal visitations in 1636 and 1639. These enjoined the clergy to observe the restrictions on preaching which were set out in the royal declaration of 1622.<sup>113</sup>

Undoubtedly, any attempt to suppress the teaching of predestination in Warwickshire would have appalled the Puritan clergy, since they placed great emphasis on the doctrine in their sermons. However, it seems that the orders introduced after 1635 were never implemented, and provoked a minimal reaction from the godly community. No ministers were presented for preaching Calvinist doctrines in the

visitations of 1635, 1636 or 1639. More importantly, none of the Puritan ministers on record after 1642 complained that the content of their sermons had been censored during the 1630s. It is also notable that none of them referred to the dangers of Arminian theology in their comments on the established church. This fact is particularly striking given the willingness of these men to condemn the formalism, superstition, and persecution which they perceived in the Laudian regime. If they had also feared the influence of Arminian heresy, there can be no doubt that they would have said so after 1642.

It would be wrong, of course, to assert that the Puritan clergy of Warwickshire took no interest in theological controversies during the 1630s. In 1643 Samuel Clarke, William Overton and Simeon Ashe composed the dedication to Ephraim Huitt's treatise on the Book of Daniel, The Whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained. They referred scathingly to the fact that Huitt's book had been denied a licence by Archbishop Laud, since it expressed opinions "which were so much disliked and cried downe by the Prelaticall party". They claimed that the book had been suppressed because it proclaimed the imminent end of the world and "the glorious calling and conversion of the Jews".<sup>14</sup> This comment suggests that Clarke and his fellows were aware of theological differences between themselves and the Anglican hierarchy, although these were not connected with the doctrine of predestination.

It remains true, nonetheless, that the Puritan clergy reacted with far greater vehemence to the practical effects of Laudian policies in the

local church than to the danger of anti-Calvinist theology. This was hardly surprising, given the direction of ecclesiastical policy during the 1630s. The promotion of formal religion at the expense of preaching, the neglect of the Sabbath, and the persecution of "painful" ministers represented a basic challenge to the principles of "godly religion". These reforms posed a more immediate threat to the Puritan ministry than theological censorship or the doctrines of Arminianism. There is no reason to assume that the imposition of anti-Calvinist doctrines was responsible for the hostility of the Puritan clergy to the ecclesiastical authorities during the 1630s.

It is important to emphasise that Laudian policies were largely ineffective at curbing the activities of the Puritan clergy in Warwickshire, despite the hostility that they provoked. The preaching ministry survived the 1630s intact. The attempt by Nathaniel Brent to restrict the availability of sermons in the region appears to have made little impact: the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1635, 1636 and 1639 show that no ministers were presented for preaching outside their parishes or at the wrong time of the day. In Coventry, people were able to attend at least two sermons on a Sunday throughout the decade, as well as three weekday lectures.<sup>115</sup> Among the preachers who was active in the town was Tristram Diamond, the nonconformist minister of Foleshill, who was preaching freely as late as 1638.<sup>116</sup>

The preaching ministry was equally unaffected by Laudian restrictions in the rest of the county. According to Samuel Clarke, Richard Vines continued to attract "multitudes of the gentry, ministry and private

Christians" to his fortnightly lectures at Nuneaton throughout the 1630s.<sup>117</sup> Similarly, the biographer of Thomas Hall asserted that he preached to large audiences from the area around Kings Norton during "the bishops times".<sup>118</sup> The diary of Thomas Dugard reveals that it was possible to hear two or three sermons on a Sunday in the vicinity of Warwick throughout the 1630s.<sup>119</sup> A lectureship was maintained at Stratford in the same period, attracting the services of popular preachers such as Robert Harris and William Whateley.

The authorities were equally unsuccessful in their attempts to suppress nonconformity. There is striking evidence that Puritan ministers continued to conduct uncanonical services in the area around Warwick during the 1630s. In 1634 James Cole, a visitor to Warwick, sent the following account to an acquaintance in London:

"With us where I now sojourn there be two congregations that is in two great mens hands, where [there] is neither crosses nor surplices, nor kneeling at the Sacrament, nor the Book of Common Prayer, nor any other behaviour but reading the Word, singing of Psalms, prayer before and after sermon with catechism."<sup>120</sup>

One of the "great men" referred to by Cole was probably Lord Brooke, but the location of the service that he described is impossible to determine. It is known, however, that a number of the ministers attached to Brooke during this period favoured services of this kind, including John Bryan, Ephraim Huitt and Samuel Clarke.

The limited effect of the drive against nonconformity was indicated by Brent's report on his visit to Warwick in 1635. This made no mention of the practices witnessed by Cole. Instead, Brent remarked that he had "much suspected" Richard Roe, the minister of St

Nicholas', but had been unable to convict him of any offence. He had received a petition against Roe but found that its contents "were disproved by many of good credit".<sup>121</sup> It is clear from Cole's letter and Dugard's diary that the situation in Warwick was far from satisfactory at the time of the Vicar General's inspection. But his intervention appears to have achieved little, while it must have inspired considerable resentment among the local clergy. This incident was typical of the impact of Laudianism on the Puritan ministers of Warwickshire: it managed to provoke their hostility without seriously impeding their actions.

#### 4) Samuel Clarke

The experience of the Puritan clergy in early Stuart Warwickshire was epitomised by the career of Samuel Clarke. Clarke was perhaps the best documented of the region's nonconformist churchmen. He was a native of Warwickshire who travelled widely, both within the county and outside, before settling as the minister of Alcester in 1633. He was one of the preachers heard by Richard Newdigate at Warwick during the early 1630s, and belonged to the circle of godly ministers attached to the second Lord Brooke. After leaving the county at the outbreak of the civil war, he recalled his experiences in a number of books published between 1642 and his death in 1683.

Clarke's opinions exemplified the principles of "godly religion". He regarded preaching as the primary role of the clergy. In 1642 he

wrote that the purpose of preaching was to inform people of the horrors of original sin, which lurked "like a serpent in the bosom", and encourage them to surrender to the mercy of God. He also asserted that it was the preacher's duty to denounce the external manifestations of sin, such as immorality and superstition, and direct his hearers towards the realisation of "a holy life".<sup>122</sup> Typically, Clarke believed that Catholicism was the greatest enemy of religion. This evil was allied with the more insidious threat of "formalism" within the established church. The dangers of popery and formalism were a recurring theme of Clarke's lectures at Warwick in the early 1630s: Newdigate recorded his appeals for the stricter enforcement of the anti-Catholic laws, and his denunciation of the non-preaching clergy as poisonous "idolls".<sup>123</sup>

In common with other Puritan ministers, Clarke regarded the "church" as a community of believers rather than a physical institution. His sermons at Warwick referred to this community as "Gods people".<sup>124</sup> In 1659 he affirmed his opinion that the church was "a communion of saints only", adding that "the members of the church are only visible amongst themselves".<sup>125</sup> The true church was a scattered and oppressed minority, which was constantly faced with the opposition of the world. This concept allowed Clarke to oppose the ecclesiastical authorities when their actions seemed to undermine the position of "Gods people". It also compelled him to adopt a highly active and combative approach towards his ministry.

This approach was evident in the pattern of Clarke's career. Following his graduation in 1620, he held curacies at Knowle in

Warwickshire and Thornton in Cheshire. Then he took his ministry to Shotwick, a village on the Wirrall peninsular, where he remained until 1627. In that year he was invited by Humphrey Fenn to return to Warwickshire to take up a lectureship in Coventry. When he arrived in the town he provoked the hostility of its resident minister, Samuel Buggs, who banned him from his pulpit and threatened to present him to the diocesan courts. After a brief struggle, Clarke was forced to leave the town in 1628. Shortly afterwards, he was offered a second lectureship by the corporation of Warwick. Here again he was opposed by the incumbent minister, Thomas Hall. Despite this, he remained in the town until 1633, when Lord Brooke presented him to the living at Alcester.

Clarke's experiences between 1627 and 1633 reflected the importance of lay patronage to the Puritan ministry. His lectureships at Coventry and Warwick depended on the support of the local magistrates, who employed him to assert their independence from the beneficed clergy appointed by the crown. In his autobiography, Clarke recalled that he was forced to leave Coventry in 1628 because he lost the support of the town corporation: the election of a new mayor, Henry Million, meant that "the zeal of the aldermen in standing for me ... was much cooled; whereupon my lecture fell to the ground".<sup>126</sup> At Warwick, Clarke succeeded in cultivating the patronage of Lord Brooke, who frequently invited him to preach at the castle.<sup>127</sup> Brooke's patronage ensured that he retained his position in the town, and eventually secured his transfer to Alcester in 1633.



Clarke's ministry at Alcester was a model of its kind. When he arrived in the town, he found that its inhabitants "were much given to swearing, drunkenness and prophanation of the Sabbath". He attributed these evils to the "want of a powerful ministry" and the pernicious influence of local Catholic families. He set about reforming the community through his preaching and "private labours": in particular, he "preached largely upon the doctrine of the Sabbath". According to Clarke, this regime achieved considerable success: "it pleased God to bless my ministry for the reforming of these things".<sup>128</sup> Calamy later asserted that his ministry was the "means of working a great reformation" in the parish.<sup>129</sup>

It is likely that Clarke introduced nonconformist services at Alcester. He had been reported to Bishop Thornborough for "the omission of ceremonies" during his period at Warwick, and he was the subject of "many and great complaints" at the time of the metropolitan visitation in 1635.<sup>130</sup> It is also probable that he organised private meetings with the members of his congregation to discuss the Bible, since his previous ministry at Shotwick had been characterised by gatherings of this kind.<sup>131</sup> If this was the case, it would explain the emergence of an organised separatist congregation in Alcester after 1642. Clarke was dismayed to discover the existence of this group when he returned to the parish at the end of the civil war. Nonetheless, it is clear that its leaders had been encouraged by his ministry during the 1630s: he described them as men "whom I looked upon before as children begotten by my ministry to God".<sup>132</sup>

The experience of Samuel Clarke during the 1630s epitomised the impact of Laudianism on the Puritan clergy in Warwickshire. Although Clarke had been in trouble with the authorities during the 1620s, the threats to his ministry multiplied significantly after 1633. The nature of his difficulties also changed. Before the Laudian period, he had been challenged mainly by the initiatives of local churchmen such as Samuel Buggs. Subsequently, he found himself assailed by "ungodly" policies imposed from above. These policies failed to either change or suppress his ministry, but they greatly strengthened his opposition to the leadership of the established church.

One example of the new situation was the imposition of the Book of Sports in 1633. The Book undermined Clarke's strict teaching on the doctrine of the Sabbath, placing the ecclesiastical authorities on the wrong side of his battle against immorality and popery. He refused to read it, though he was "often enjoined" to do so.<sup>133</sup> He later recalled the situation in 1646, when he described an act of divine punishment against a member of his flock:

"Upon the coming forth of the Declaration for sports, a lusty young woman went on the Sabbath day to a Greene, not farre off, where shée said she would dance as long as she could stand: but while she was dancing God struck her with a violent disease, whereof within two or three dayes after she died." <sup>134</sup>

This incident clearly impressed Clarke as a vindication of his disobedience and, by extension, a judgment against the Anglican hierarchy. He rejoiced that it "struck a great awe" in the rest of his congregation, and that "the Lord added divers to the church by my ministry at that time".<sup>135</sup>

Clarke was also faced with repeated threats of prosecution in the ecclesiastical courts during the 1630s. These incidents were all occasioned, either directly and indirectly, by the new policies of the Laudian regime. In 1633, when Clarke was still lecturing at Warwick, the news that William Laud had become Archbishop of Canterbury encouraged Thomas Hall, the vicar of St Mary's, to travel to London to urge his prosecution in the High Commission. Shortly afterwards, Clarke found himself "much threatened" by the courts for his stand against the Book of Sports at Alcester. He was subsequently presented for nonconformity in the metropolitan visitation of 1635.<sup>136</sup>

Despite these dangers, Clarke managed to avoid suspension during the 1630s. He "heard no more" of Hall's attempt to denounce him in 1633; and he escaped prosecution for refusing to read the Book of Sports. In 1635 he was saved by one of his patrons, Richard Knightly of Fawsley, who wrote to Brent on his behalf.<sup>137</sup> Clarke recalled that he continued his ministry at Alcester without disturbance between 1635 and 1640, though it is highly improbable that he altered his opinions or activities during these years. The most likely explanation for this period of toleration was the attitude of Bishop Thornborough, who resumed control of ecclesiastical discipline following Brent's intervention. Clarke described Thornborough as a "peacable" man, and recalled his lenient treatment at his hands on at least one occasion.<sup>138</sup>

The fact that Clarke retained his living throughout this period is striking evidence of the failure of Laudian persecution in

Warwickshire. If the leaders of the church could not silence such a defiant nonconformist, how could they deal with less conspicuous men? It is probable that many godly ministers escaped the attention of the authorities through a show of outward conformity. Clarke recalled that most of the clergy in the area around Alcester consented to read the Book of Sports, though he described a number of them as "godly".<sup>123</sup> There can be little doubt that many other "painful" ministers adopted similar tactics, including men such as Dugard, Spencer and Trapp.

Although it was more eventful than most, Clarke's career conformed to a general pattern. He was distressed by the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s, which seemed to contradict the most basic principles of his ministry, but in practice he was allowed to continue this ministry without any serious disruption. He expressed his discontent through open defiance, while many of his fellows were more cautious but no less worried about the direction of religious affairs. This explains why so many of the region's clergy were prepared to support the cause of ecclesiastical reform after 1640, and the ease with which they embraced the Presbyterian settlement which followed the civil war.

## Chapter Four: The "High Church" Clergy of Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"The altar is the greatest place of God's residence upon earth, greater than the pulpit."

William Laud, 1633<sup>1</sup>

It was shown in Chapter Three that the Puritan clergy were a highly organised faction within the established church in Warwickshire. They regarded themselves as the representatives of a select group of "godly" Christians, to whom they offered a distinctive style of "painful" ministry. As such, it is relatively easy to identify Puritan ministers, to examine their beliefs and assess their role in the local community. However, it is much harder to identify those churchmen who supported the more ceremonial style of worship promoted by the church hierarchy in the 1630s. On the whole, such ministers were far less conspicuous than their "godly" counterparts. Indeed, there is no evidence of any organised "Laudian" or "High Church" faction within the Warwickshire clergy in the early Stuart period.

It is possible, however, to identify certain local ministers whose actions, or recorded opinions, marked them out as advocates of a distinctly sacramental and anti-Puritan style of religion. These men did not represent an organised party within the church. Rather, they were a group of individuals who shared similar beliefs about the

nature of the Church of England, and expressed support for the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s. The leading members of this group included Francis Holyoake of Southam, John Doughtie of Lapworth and Thomas Hall of St Mary's in Warwick. Men with similar views occupied benefices dotted across the county, including Coventry, Ladbroke and Clifton-upon-Dunsmore.

For the purposes of this chapter, I have chosen to describe the ministers in this group as "High Churchmen". Although this term is not perfect, it seems preferable to the main alternatives of "Arminian" or "Laudian". The term "Arminian" is unnecessarily exclusive, since it implies a specific theological position which was only held by a minority of those Warwickshire ministers who advocated a ceremonial style of worship. Similarly, the term "Laudian" implies an association with the ideology and policies of Archbishop Laud. However, men such as Francis Holyoake and Thomas Hall were active in the region long before Laud emerged as a national figure.

The religious attitudes which distinguished "High Church" ministers from the rest of the Warwickshire clergy are examined in the first two sections of this chapter. Section one assesses the importance of "Arminian" theology. It argues that the local ministers who supported a markedly sacramental style of religion during the 1620s and 1630s were not necessarily motivated by Arminian doctrines. Rather, they were committed to a highly institutional idea of the church, which led them to concentrate on external forms of worship rather than preaching, and to emphasise the importance of order and

decency in services. Section two describes the opinions of the region's High Church ministers in detail, and shows the way in which their institutional view of the church informed their whole attitude towards religion and society.

Sections three and four examine the practical impact of the High Church clergy in Warwickshire. These sections argue that High Church ministers were active in the county throughout the early Stuart period, but were greatly encouraged by the episcopal policies of the 1630s. However, their impact was largely confined to individual parishes, and they failed in their efforts to diminish the influence of the Puritan community. Ultimately, the High Church clergy lacked the organisation to make a lasting impression on the religious life of the region. These themes are explored in terms of the county as a whole in section three. In section four they are approached through a case study of Francis Holyoake, the rector of Southam from 1605 to 1642.

#### 1) The Doctrinal Position of the High Church Clergy

According to Nicholas Tyacke, the theology of "Arminianism" was the driving force behind the ecclesiastical policies of Charles I and Archbishop Laud. The men who supported these policies were motivated by their rejection of orthodox Calvinism, particularly the doctrine of predestination. The abandonment of predestination allowed them to adopt a sacramental theology of Grace, in which the

offices of the church were instrumental to salvation. Accordingly, "Arminian" divines promoted an ornate and ritualistic style of worship, based on the sacraments rather than the preaching of the Word. They re-defined orthodox Calvinists as "Puritans", and attempted to suppress the dissemination of Calvinist doctrines.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to examine Tyacke's argument about the role of "Arminian" theology in the context of Warwickshire. Were the supporters of Laud's policies in the region motivated by "Arminian" doctrines? The evidence is fairly limited. Only a relatively small number of the region's High Church ministers went into print. There is no collection of sermons by the High Church clergy comparable to those summarised in the journals of Richard Newdigate. As a result, it is impossible to know whether men such as Thomas Hall of Warwick or William Panting of Coventry, whose actions suggest that they were committed to the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s, were orthodox Calvinists or "Arminians".<sup>3</sup>

However, despite these limitations, it is possible to discover the theological opinions of a small number of the region's High Church ministers. The most prominent of these was Francis Holyoake, the rector of Southam. In 1633 Holyoake repudiated the doctrine of predestination in the fourth edition of his Latin-English Dictionary. He defined the word *Predestinatiani* as follows:

"A kind of heretics that held fatal predestination of every particular matter, person or action, and that all things came to passe, and fell out necessarily; especially touching the salvation and damnation of particular men." <sup>4</sup>



Holyoake's rejection of predestination was consistent with his ministry at Southam, where he promoted a notably ceremonial and anti-Puritan style of religion. In 1642 he was turned out of his living by the parliamentary army; he was subsequently sequestered as a notorious "malignant".<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no evidence of Holyoake's theological opinions before 1633. His only other published work was a visitation sermon preached in Coventry in 1609, entitled A Sermon of Obedience, Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall. This was a vigorous defence of the authority of the established church, directed against the town's nonconformist community. The sermon advocated a highly institutional style of worship, based on the strict observance of prescribed rituals, and sanctioned by the established authority of the King and his bishops.<sup>6</sup> Holyoake made no attempt to connect this type of religion to any specific theological position. Rather, he commended it to his audience as the established practice of the church, and "part of that order and decorum that God hath commanded in generall".<sup>7</sup>

While it appears that Francis Holyoake was a doctrinal "Arminian", there is evidence that two other High Church ministers in Warwickshire were orthodox Calvinists. The first was Samuel Buggs, the vicar of St Michael's in Coventry between 1623 and 1633. Buggs was undoubtedly committed to a ceremonial and aggressively anti-Puritan style of religion. Throughout his ministry, he sought to improve the fabric and decoration of his parish church; he exhorted his congregation to observe the canons of the church, and struggled

to reduce the influence of Puritan lecturers in the town.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, Buggs seems to have espoused a strictly Calvinist theology of Grace. Preaching in 1622, he asserted his belief in "Gods eternal predestination and election". He stated that "no man ought to enquire ... why Jacob is loved and Esau hated, because the potter may doe with the clay as he listeth".<sup>9</sup>

The second High Churchman who apparently accepted Calvinist theology was John Doughtie, the rector of Lapworth between 1633 and 1642. A fellow of Merton College, Oxford, Doughtie was involved in the bitter disputes between Calvinist and Arminian factions in the University during the 1620s. He published his opinions on these controversies in two sermons in 1628. In the second, A Sermon Touching Church Schismes, he criticised the excesses of both sides. However, he was careful to distinguish between over-zealous Calvinists who rejected the "externall rites" of the church and Arminians who challenged its essential doctrines. He described the latter as crypto-papists, who sought to re-introduce Catholicism under the pretence of suppressing nonconformity:

"First they refute one bad opinion that they may set up a worse ... Are there none now which cry down puritanisme whereby to establish papisme?"<sup>10</sup>

To Doughtie, there was no question that Calvinism was the orthodox theology of the Church of England. The Arminians, who stood "betwixt papistry and semi-pelagianism", represented a fundamental challenge to this orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup>

Doughtie expressed his hostility to the Arminians again in 1631, following his appointment as one of the proctors of the University. In June 1631 two young divines, Giles Thorne and William Hodges, preached violently anti-Arminian sermons in St Mary's church, "using bold expressions against those they commonly called Arminians and their errours, under the titles of Pelagians".<sup>12</sup> As a result, the two men were ordered to submit copies of their sermons to the Vice-Chancellor. They refused to do so, and appealed instead to the proctors for a judgment on the matter. According to Anthony Wood, "the Proctors unadvisedly received the appeal, and did then name delegates to take the matter into consideration".<sup>13</sup> This action provoked a petition from the Vice-Chancellor to the King. The King ruled that Thorne and Hodges should be expelled, and directed the proctors to relinquish their office.

In the light of his background at Oxford, one might have expected Doughtie to oppose the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s following his appointment as rector of Lapworth. However, it is clear that he was an active supporter of these policies. In 1640 the "godly" parishioners of Lapworth presented a petition against their minister to the House of Lords. Among other things, this alleged that Doughtie had preached in support of the 1640 canons; he had asserted that it was not necessary for a minister to prove his doctrine by scripture; and he had frequently rebuked the "godly" men and women of the village, acquiring a reputation as a "scoffer of goodness and good men".<sup>14</sup> Doughtie abandoned his parish for Oxford at the outbreak of the civil war. He was subsequently employed as a

royalist chaplain and author of polemical tracts in support of the King.

Samuel Buggs and John Doughtie demonstrate that it was possible for ministers to reconcile Calvinist theology with support for "High Church" policies. There is no need to regard this position as eccentric or contradictory. It is clear from their published works that Buggs and Doughtie advocated a markedly institutional style of religion, based on decorous acts of formal worship rather than preaching. In this, they echoed the opinions of Francis Holyoake in the Sermon of Obedience. They only differed from Holyoake on the theoretical question of predestination. For all practical purposes, it seems that their broad attitude towards the established church (which is described in section two) was more important than their precise theological opinions.

Clearly, Tyacke's argument about the connection between "anti-Calvinist" theology and sacramental religion needs to be modified to accommodate men such as Buggs and Doughtie. However, it would be wrong to dismiss the connection between doctrine and practice altogether. Certain ministers, such as Francis Holyoake, may have been encouraged by Arminian ideas to promote a ritualistic style of worship. Others, while accepting the doctrine of predestination in theory, may have placed little emphasis on it in practice. While the doctrine of predestination was of central importance to the Puritan clergy, who based their religion on the personal experience of God's Grace, it was considerably less relevant to those ministers who emphasised the institutional role of the established church.

The tendency to play down the doctrine of predestination was evident in the published sermons of both Buggs and Doughtie. Indeed, both men sought to discourage public debate on the subject. In 1622 Buggs enjoined his congregation to put aside vain speculations about the nature of "Gods eternal predestination".<sup>15</sup> Doughtie went further in 1627, asserting that the doctrine was a "divine mystery" beyond the scope of human reason:

"It is not so much curiosity as a kinde of sacriledge to prie into the forbidden secrets of God's owne closet: it argues a foul presumption in us of our strength, when (as God knoweth) our knowledge is but small and weake." <sup>16</sup>

To Doughtie, over-precise speculations about the doctrine of predestination threatened to undermine the unity of the church. He therefore rebuked both Arminians and over-zealous Calvinists for "calling too nicely into dispute those mysteries which are more justly to be adored".<sup>17</sup>

## 2) The Institutional Church

The most fundamental characteristic of the High Church clergy in Warwickshire was not their acceptance of "Arminian" theology, but their understanding of the established church as an institution. Men such as Francis Holyoake, Samuel Buggs and John Doughtie were united by their belief that the "church" was primarily a physical organisation, created for the formal worship of God. This organisation was based on parish churches, the clergy, and the external trappings of worship. Clearly, this institutional outlook

contrasted sharply with the beliefs of the Puritan clergy, who tended to regard the "church" to a gathering of Christian men and women, united by their personal relationship with God.

The institutional approach to religion had several important consequences. Firstly, it discouraged the region's High Church ministers from emphasising the personal experience of sin and salvation, since membership of the institutional church did not depend on the powerful experience of personal faith. Accordingly, High Church ministers devoted much less attention to the themes of internal repentance and regeneration than their Puritan counterparts. The published sermons of Holyoake, Buggs and Doughtie, and the writings of other High Churchmen such as Richard Parre of Ladbroke and Christopher Harvey of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, contained practically no reference to the need for personal "conversion" to true religion.

Similarly, the High Church clergy of Warwickshire showed much less zeal for the moral reform of society than their Puritan fellows. The members of the "godly church", as a minority group, were happy to engage in a "warre against the world". This option was less attractive to men who regarded the church as an integral part of society. Thus Samuel Burton of Gloucester, preaching an assize sermon at Warwick in 1619, condemned the excesses of godly ministers who sought to suppress "May-poles and Morrice-dances, and other such trifles".<sup>18</sup> This outlook did not imply that High Church ministers were indifferent to the behaviour of the laity. It was rather that

their institutional approach to religion was not well suited to campaigns to reform the rest of the population.

While the institutional concept of the church led its adherents to marginalise ideas which were central to the "godly clergy", it also caused them to emphasise aspects of religion which their Puritan counterparts tended to undervalue. Clearly, formal acts of worship were highly important to ministers who regarded the church as a physical organisation, rather than a gathering of the "saved". Preaching in 1610, Francis Holyoake insisted that "the dignitie of the sacrament" was the cornerstone of religious life. He argued that it was essential for church services to be conducted with "modesty and gravity", so that the rites of the church "may procure a reverence unto holy things".<sup>19</sup>

It was a natural extension of this position to accord respect to the physical trappings of worship. This view was summed up by John Doughtie in 1651:

"Things consecrated or given holy uses may justifiably be termed holy too, and so ought of right to be esteemed by us considering the ends and uses for which they serve."<sup>20</sup>

This view was particularly relevant to the service of communion. It encouraged ministers such as Francis Holyoake and William Panting, the vicar of St Michael's in Coventry, to adorn their communion tables with decorative clothes in the early 1630s, and to convert them into "altars" after 1635.<sup>21</sup>

Alongside the emphasis on ceremony, the institutional view of the church encouraged the decoration and refurbishment of parish churches. This followed from the belief that formal worship required an appropriately "respectful" setting. In 1628 Richard Parre, the rector of Ladbroke, praised a Northamptonshire gentleman for "his building, beautifying and adorning the Houses of God".<sup>22</sup> The "beautifying" of churches was often promoted by the High Church clergy themselves. The ministry of Francis Holyoake was marked by a series of improvements and decorations to the parish church at Southam, which are described in section four. In 1633 Samuel Buggs installed an organ in St Michael's church in Coventry. His policy of refurbishing the church was continued by his successor, William Panting, in the following decade.<sup>23</sup>

The High Church clergy of Warwickshire regarded the established church as an indissoluble part of society. As such, it was inseparable from the state, and derived its authority ultimately from the King. This view was not incompatible with "godly religion". However, it was clearly more relevant to ministers who regarded the church as an institution, rather than a gathering of individuals directly accountable to God. Accordingly, issues of earthly authority and obedience were a prominent feature in the sermons and writings of High Church ministers. They were at pains to inform their parishioners of their obligations to the "Christian magistrate", both as loyal subjects and members of the church.



The concept of the Divine Right of Kings was at the centre of this endeavour. This concept was set out, with particular verve, in Samuel Burton's assize sermon in Warwick in 1619:

"Rulers and Governours ... are the Ministers of God; they are His Deputies and Surrogats ... God hath made them a little lower than the Angels, and crowned them with glorie and worship." <sup>24</sup>

This theme was developed by Samuel Buggs in 1622. Buggs exhorted his audience to obey the King "whom God hath chosen to be over us ... whom God marked and the world admires".<sup>25</sup> Inevitably, Divine Right was also emphasised in the writings of the region's High Church ministers at the outbreak of civil war, including John Doughtie and Christopher Harvey of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore.<sup>26</sup>

The consequence of Divine Right was unquestioning obedience to established authority. This applied equally in church and state. Thus Francis Holyoake reminded his congregation in 1610 that it was the duty of Christians "to be ruled".<sup>27</sup> In 1619 Samuel Burton asserted that "the Doctrine of Christ teacheth all due obedience and subjection to Authoritie".<sup>28</sup> This obligation was particularly relevant in matters of church policy. The High Church clergy consistently argued that church rituals which were not explicitly commanded by scripture could be lawfully imposed by the "Christian magistrate". This view was reiterated by Christopher Harvey at the outbreak of the civil war. Harvey asserted that "those things which were in themselves indifferent" became obligatory once they were authorised by the crown: they had to be obeyed because "we owe obedience unto that authority for the Lord's sake".<sup>29</sup>

The reverence which subjects owed to the "Christian magistrate" extended to the established church, which derived its authority from the King. Accordingly, the High Church clergy of Warwickshire argued that bishops and ministers were to be respected because of their special office. In particular, the status of the bishops was exalted. In 1622 Samuel Buggs asserted that the English episcopacy was one of the greatest blessings that Christ had conferred upon His church.<sup>30</sup> Six years later Richard Parre of Ladbroke described Christ as "the chiefe sheepeard and Bishop of our soules",<sup>31</sup> Naturally, this high status demanded the respect and obedience of members of the church. This was spelt out most grandly by Francis Holyoake, who asserted that to deny the bishops "the honor and respect due unto their office ... is treason against God himself".<sup>32</sup>

At a less exalted level, High Church ministers insisted that the parish clergy also merited the respect of the laity on account of their office. Again, this view followed naturally from their emphasis on the church as an institution. The special status of the clergy was consistently emphasised, and was a central theme in Holyoake's visitation sermon in 1610.<sup>33</sup> The theme was also taken up in the writings of royalist divines during the civil war. Thus Christopher Harvey remarked in 1645 that parish priests, by virtue of "their publick office and employment", enjoyed a relationship with God "in a special manner above all others".<sup>34</sup>

This outlook had several important consequences. Firstly, it implied that the status of parish ministers rested on their office, rather than the quality of their preaching or life. This view was stated

explicitly by Holyoake in 1610.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, it followed that the clergy were not required to justify their doctrines by reference to scripture: their parishioners were obliged to accept what they said by virtue of their office. This was the position of John Doughtie, according to the petition against him in 1640:

"The said John Doughtie, preaching at Lapworth ... affirmed that it was not necessary for the minister to prove his doctrine by Scripture, but the people ought to believe it on his authority." <sup>36</sup>

Clearly, this opinion was the antithesis of Puritanism. It implied that the church as an institution, rather than the individual guided by the Bible, was the basis of true religion. Moreover, it discouraged the kind of direct and emotional preaching which was at the heart of "godly" Protestantism.

Another result of this view was the assertion that even negligent ministers were entitled to respect because of their "office and employment". This opinion fitted naturally with the idea that the sacraments, rather than preaching, were at the centre of religious life. Thus Holyoake argued that "the dignitie of the sacrament dependeth not on the worthinesse of the minister", and enjoined his congregation not to "refuse the precious pearle offered unto us because it is brought ... in an uncleane boxe".<sup>37</sup> This position was a direct challenge to the Puritan clergy, whose sermons frequently derided the slackness and corruption of other churchmen. The complaints of these preachers were condemned as unjust and unwarranted by High Church ministers such as Holyoake and John Doughtie.<sup>38</sup>

Ultimately, the insistence of the region's High Church ministers on maintaining authority in the church was based on their desire to preserve the order and decorum of religion. This was the purpose of the "Christian magistrate" and the officers of the church. According to Holyoake, the episcopal system was essential to prevent "anarchie" in the Christian commonwealth.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, John Doughtie asserted that the need to preserve religious order had been revealed by God from the earliest days of the Gospel, and had led to the creation of bishops and clergy in the New Testament church. Subsequently, their authority had provided a safeguard against the perils of disunity and schism.<sup>40</sup>

The need to maintain order meant that outward forms of worship had to be uniformly observed. This uniformity was maintained through the use of the Book of Common Prayer, which was enforced by the authority of the bishops and the parish clergy. Francis Holyoake asserted that it was essential for every member of the church to adhere to the liturgy and rites which were prescribed in the Prayer Book, as they were "part of that order and decorum that God hath commanded in generall".<sup>41</sup> This position was restated by Christopher Harvey and John Doughtie during the civil war, when they defended the established liturgy as essential to the discipline of the church.<sup>42</sup>

Inevitably, this outlook brought High Church ministers into conflict with those godly churchmen and lay people who refused to observe the rituals of the established church. It should be emphasised that this conflict was based on the preservation of religious order rather than questions of doctrine. The main issues at stake were obedience and

uniformity. Preaching in 1622, Samuel Buggs of Coventry condemned the "stiffe-necked Schismatickes" who objected to ceremonies "out of opposition to the order and discipline of the church".<sup>43</sup> Six years later John Doughtie accused nonconformists of "standing forth against the church in termes point blanke".<sup>44</sup> At the outbreak of the civil war, Christopher Harvey denounced nonconformists for refusing to accept the authority of the church, when they were "bound in conscience to yield obedience".<sup>45</sup>

Naturally, since the High Church clergy regarded the church as an integral part of society, they believed that the disobedience of nonconformists challenged the government of the Kingdom as a whole. Thus Samuel Burton accused the Puritan clergy of "barbarous contempt of Law and order" in 1619, and asserted that their behaviour was "not to bee suffered in any government".<sup>46</sup> Inevitably, this idea was reiterated by High Church ministers during the civil war. Both John Doughtie and Christopher Harvey saw the rebellion against the King as the logical extension of nonconformist tendencies. According to Harvey, it was caused by "those who are not, as they ought to be, both Loyal subjects of the Crown and obedient Sons of the Church of England".<sup>47</sup>

High Church ministers asserted that nonconformity was also a source of intolerable division within the church. This argument was presented most forcefully by Francis Holyoake in 1610:

"There are [some] that holde some of the ceremonies of the church lawful, but deny obedience to some other, as some approve of kneeling at the communion but deny the rest ... They do unwittingly in their diversities allow all, and yet all agree in the generall point of disobedience to the church." <sup>48</sup>

In a similar vein, John Doughtie accused nonconformists of fomenting religious disunity in 1628.<sup>49</sup> In 1640 he remarked that the activity of nonconformists at Lapworth was "a disturbance to the congregation".<sup>50</sup> This theme was developed by Christopher Harvey in 1645, when he asserted that the divisions created by nonconformists "tend to the dissolution ... of the body of Christ".<sup>51</sup>

The High Church clergy alleged that nonconformity, as well as dividing the established church, was an encouragement to separatism. This fear was almost certainly unfounded: the great majority of nonconformists in Warwickshire remained within the Church of England before 1642. However, the connection between Puritans and separatists was consistently emphasised by the region's High Church ministers. Indeed, Samuel Buggs and John Doughtie used the words "separatist" and "nonconformist" almost interchangeably in their sermons in the 1620s.<sup>52</sup> Predictably, Doughtie later asserted that the emergence of the religious sects in the civil war was the inevitable consequence of nonconformity on the parliamentary side.<sup>53</sup>

In conclusion, it is clear that the religious outlook of the High Church clergy represented the antithesis of "godly religion". It was based on the church as an institution, rather than a community of believers, and placed acts of formal worship, rather than the personal experience of faith, at the centre of Christian life. The ceremonies of the church were part of the wider order ordained by God for the good of society, and upheld by the Christian magistrate,

the bishops and the parish clergy. This perspective was essentially static, in contrast to the dynamic and evangelical outlook of Puritan ministers. The basically conservative attitudes of the High Church clergy in Warwickshire was one of the major factors which limited their impact in the region, as will be shown in the following section.

### 3) The Impact of the High Church Clergy

Inevitably, the activity of High Church ministers in Warwickshire is less well documented than that of their Puritan counterparts. To a large extent, their institutional approach to religion precluded the kind of active ministry and organisation which made the "godly" clergy conspicuous. The same factors made High Churchmen generally less inclined to go into print than their Puritan fellows. This problem is compounded by the fact that it was extremely unusual for High Church ministers to be reported to the ecclesiastical courts. As a result, it is very difficult to assess the number of High Churchmen in the local clergy for most of the period before the civil war.

However, the strength of the High Church clergy is indicated by the sequestration of "malignant" ministers by parliament after 1643. The sequestration records are an imperfect source. In many cases they provide only a brief account of the activities of the churchmen affected; often, they contain no relevant information at all. It is

likely that the number of ministers with royalist sympathies was greater than the level of sequestrations suggests. For example, Christopher Harvey of Clifton escaped the attention of the County Committee by circulating his royalist opinions in private manuscripts, which were only published in 1662.<sup>54</sup> William Dugdale recorded that another royalist minister, John Ward of Shustocke, "was so severely oppressed by the Parliament party that he held his head for a time, and at length obtained the vicarage of Gretton in Northamptonshire". Ward also appears to have escaped sequestration.<sup>55</sup>

In total, forty-one Warwickshire ministers were removed from their livings between 1643 and 1646. Of this number, eleven had been instituted after 1640. Of the remaining 30, another five were sequestered for pluralism, negligence or immoral behaviour. This left twenty-five churchmen who had been active in the region in the period before the Long Parliament, who were presumably sequestered for their royalist views. Six of these men were charged with actively assisting the King's forces during the war. These included William Clark, the minister of Brinklow from 1625, who was removed "upon supposition that he received letters from ... his Sacred Majesty". Another, Henry Kenrick of Burton Dassett, had abandoned his cure to join the royalist army in 1642.<sup>56</sup>

The royalism of these ministers is a reasonable indication of their religious sympathies, although it is not conclusive proof that they were High Churchmen. Two sequestered ministers, Francis Holyoake and John Doughtie, had espoused High Church ideas in their sermons before



the outbreak of the war. Another, William Panting of St Michael's in Coventry, had promoted the decoration and refurbishment of his parish church during the 1630s.<sup>57</sup> It is probable that the majority of the 25 sequestered clergy had given similar support to the ecclesiastical policies of the Laudian period, and had advocated a broadly High Church version of Protestantism during their tenure in the region.

The evidence of the sequestrations can be supplemented by other sources, which show that another six High Church divines were active in Warwickshire between 1625 and 1640. Two of these men, Christopher Harvey and John Ward, managed to evade the county committee during the 1640s. George Dale of Sowe was plundered by the parliamentarian army in 1642 but died before the proceedings for his sequestration were complete.<sup>58</sup> Richard Parre, the rector of Ladbroke, left the county in 1629, and was subsequently preferred to the bishopric of Sodor and Mann.<sup>59</sup> Another two ministers, Samuel Buggs of Coventry and Thomas Hall of Warwick, died before the outbreak of the civil war.

In total, at least 31 Warwickshire parishes were occupied by High Church ministers at some stage between 1625 and 1640. This represented 15% of the benefices in the county. These livings were distributed evenly across the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester. They ranged from small rural communities such as Shustocke and Stoneleigh to major centres of population such as Coventry, Birmingham and Warwick. The distribution of these parishes indicates the importance of royal patronage to the High Church clergy: just

under a third of them were controlled by the crown. These included parishes such as Coventry and Warwick where the local magistrates were predominantly Puritan, and would probably have appointed "godly" ministers if they had been able to do so.

How influential were High Church ministers in Warwickshire? It was common for them to preach outside their own parishes on formal occasions such as visitations and the quarter-sessions at Warwick. Francis Holyoake preached his controversial sermon on ecclesiastical authority at the archidiaconal visitation in Coventry in 1609. Similarly, Samuel Burton, the archdeacon of Gloucester, preached a strongly anti-Puritan sermon at the general assises in Warwick in 1618.<sup>60</sup> During the 1630s, Thomas Dugard recorded that the majority of preachers at the Warwick quarter-sessions were staunch conformists. In 1633, for example, the quarter-sessions sermon was preached by John Doughtie. Henry Carpenter and William Panting of Coventry preached at the quarter-sessions in 1636 and 1640 respectively.<sup>61</sup>

However, apart from these formal occasions, it appears that High Churchmen were less inclined to preach outside their own benefices than their "godly" counterparts. The most frequent preachers in Warwick during the 1630s were men with markedly Puritan sympathies, such as Samuel Clarke, John Bryan of Barford and Thomas Spencer of Bubrooke.<sup>62</sup> The lectureships at Birmingham, Nuneaton and Stratford were held by committed Puritans in the same period.<sup>63</sup> On the whole, the institutional outlook of High Church ministers deterred them from adopting a travelling, evangelical style of ministry. As a result,

their main impact was felt in individual parishes dotted across the county.

One way in which High Church ministers influenced their parishes was by promoting the decoration and upkeep of church buildings, and the purchase of artefacts associated with ceremonial worship. These policies were pursued by the High Church clergy throughout the early Stuart period, but were naturally more pronounced during the 1630s, when the episcopal visitations placed a strong emphasis on these areas. Both parishes in Coventry, which were occupied by High Churchmen, underwent extensive renovation and decoration after 1633.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Francis Holyoake's parish church at Southam was extensively repaired and re-decorated during the Laudian period. This was combined with the acquisition of new surplices and communion plate.<sup>65</sup>

Another way in which High Church divines made an impact in their parishes was by attempting to enforce religious conformity. This was usually provoked by the challenge of Puritan ministers or lay people. The ministry of Samuel Buggs in Coventry was notable for his repeated clashes with nonconformists. When the corporation appointed Samuel Clarke as a lecturer in 1628, Buggs accused him of nonconformity and barred him from the town's pulpits. A struggle ensued in which Buggs successfully appealed to sympathetic members of the corporation. As a result, Clarke was expelled in 1630.<sup>66</sup> Another Puritan preacher, Josiah Slater of Birmingham, recorded in his will that he had been driven from Coventry "by the bishops" in the period that Buggs was the city's minister.<sup>67</sup> It is probable that

Buggs had threatened to present Slater to Bishop Morton, and thereby forced him to depart from the town.

Besides these confrontations with Puritan ministers, Buggs made positive efforts to ensure the conformity of his parishioners. In 1631 he enforced an episcopal order that the congregations of St Michael's and Holy Trinity were to remove their hats during services.<sup>69</sup> The City Annals for the same year recorded that he enjoined his flock to keep the Christmas communion.<sup>69</sup> Towards the end of his ministry, Buggs was engaged in a protracted dispute with the corporation about the appointment of an assistant preacher. In 1633 he propounded a series of articles to the aldermen concerning the appointment of an assistant. These included provisions that the appointee should recite the liturgy as well as preach, and "serve according to the Canon to show his Conformitie".<sup>70</sup>

A similar concern for uniformity was demonstrated by Thomas Hall, the minister of St Mary's in Warwick between 1618 and 1638. Again, this came to the fore in a clash with Samuel Clarke, who was appointed as a lecturer by Warwick corporation following his departure from Coventry. Hall was consistently opposed to Clarke's ministry, and caused him "often to be presented for the omission of ceremonies". In 1633 their animosity flared into violence, as Clarke recalled in his autobiography:

"At length Mr Hall, being impatient of my continuance, came to pull me out of the pulpit, and by his clamours and noise so interrupted me that I was forced to give over." <sup>71</sup>

Hall succeeded in removing Clarke in 1633, when the corporation resolved to end his employment in order to prevent further "Suite and Troubles".<sup>72</sup> It appears that he continued to campaign against nonconformity until the end of his ministry. In 1638 Thomas Dugard recorded in his diary that "I was at a sermon by Mr Hall, who strongly inveighed against those leaving for New England".<sup>73</sup>

John Doughtie of Lapworth also condemned the Puritan community in his parish, and committed himself to the maintenance of religious uniformity. The petition against him in 1640 stated that he had preached against the activity of a group of Puritans in the village, alleging that their "turning and tossing over the leaves of the Bible is a disturbance to the congregation". He had also defended the canons of 1640 against the criticisms of his parishioners. According to the petition, he had insisted that there was nothing in the canons "to be disliked", adding that "he believed in his conscience that if St Paul had been there and made them the Parliament would have condemned them".<sup>74</sup>

How effective were the endeavours of High Church ministers in curbing nonconformity in their parishes? In some cases, it appears that a determined minister could achieve a considerable degree of success. Before the appointment of Francis Holyoake to Southam in 1605 the parish was a centre of Puritan activity. Holyoake's predecessor, John Oxenbridge, had vacated the living following the imposition of the 1604 canons. In the subsequent period, however, Holyoake appears to have suppressed all vestiges of nonconformity. No nonconformist incidents were recorded in the town in any of the

surviving visitations between 1614 and 1639, despite Holyoake's obvious readiness to report any such occurrence. In 1642 a parliamentary soldier, Nehemiah Wharton, described Southam as "a very malignant towne, both minister and people".<sup>75</sup>

Holyoake's success at Southam, however, does not appear to have been repeated by other High Church ministers in the region. In more populous areas, where nonconformity was firmly entrenched, the endeavours of individual churchmen could make only a limited impact. This was the case both at Coventry and Warwick. In the former, Samuel Buggs and his successors appear to have won the support of a party within the town. But they were unable to eradicate a well established body of nonconformists, who continued to exert influence in their congregations and in the council throughout the 1620s and 1630s.<sup>76</sup> The same was true at Warwick: despite the efforts of Thomas Hall, the town continued to serve as a meeting place for nonconformist clergy and lay people throughout the years of his ministry.<sup>77</sup>

More generally, the ability of the "godly church" to cut across parish boundaries meant that the attacks of the High Church clergy could never suppress it. While Francis Holyoake succeeded in rooting out nonconformity in Southam, his Puritan predecessor, John Oxenbridge, resumed his ministry as a lecturer in Coventry in 1610.<sup>78</sup> When Samuel Clarke was forced out of Coventry he moved on to Warwick; when he was removed from Warwick he was presented by Lord Brooke to a living at Alcester. Subsequently, he continued to travel widely throughout the county, preaching in Warwick and journeying to

Nuneaton to attend the lectures of Richard Vines.<sup>79</sup> This pattern was repeated by "godly" ministers across the region. The High Church clergy, based in their own parishes, lacked the organisation and the outward-looking approach to the ministry to counter this activity. Ultimately, it could only be seriously challenged by episcopal policy.

Although the High Church ministers of Warwickshire were unable to stamp out nonconformity, their activities reinforced the opposition of the "godly" community to their "formalist" style of religion. This fact was demonstrated by the hostile reaction of Puritan churchmen and lay people to their activities. In his introduction to Holyoake's visitation sermon in 1610, Samuel Hinton, the archdeacon of Coventry, described the "tumultuous rumours it bred; and how it was by many more hainously taken than either heresie or treason".<sup>80</sup> Holyoake himself commented on the tendency of the godly community to vilify ministers who preached uniformity.<sup>81</sup> In 1631 this claim was confirmed by the moderate Puritan, John Burges of Sutton Coldfield. Burges attested that it was common for godly lay people to castigate churchmen "that are for Conformitie", deriding them as "Time-servers" and "Formalists".<sup>82</sup>

Inevitably, the attacks on High Church ministers from the "godly" community were especially pronounced during the 1630s. The activity of High Churchmen was particularly resented at a time when nonconformity was under renewed attack from the authorities, and the tenets of "formalism" were being imposed throughout the local church. This explains the reaction against ministers such as John Doughtie in the early 1640s. Doughtie himself recalled later that the

"conformable, worthier" members of the clergy had been condemned throughout the country as "popish" or "scandalous" at the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>33</sup> In 1642 Richard Vines, the Puritan minister of Weddington, castigated the High Church clergy as "Idoll shepheards" who preached "mostly about Orders and Ceremonies".<sup>34</sup>

It should be emphasised, however, that the High Church clergy did not in themselves provoke the antagonism of the "godly" community in the 1630s. There is no evidence that High Church ministers increased significantly in numbers under the Laudian regime. Indeed, the diverse pattern of patronage in the county made this almost impossible. Two of the region's most active High Churchmen in the 1630s, Francis Holyoake and Thomas Hall, had been instituted in the reign of James I. Nor were the High Church clergy, who lacked the evangelical spirit and organisation of their Puritan adversaries, capable of mounting a serious challenge to "godly religion". Essentially, the grievances of Puritans in the 1630s arose from policies imposed from above. Naturally, these policies accorded with the views of High Church ministers. But it was the attempt to impose them by authority throughout the church which provoked the bitter hostility of the godly community.

#### 4) Francis Holyoake in Southam

Francis Holyoake was the *exemplar* of the High Church clergy in Warwickshire. He was presented to the living of Southam in 1605,



following the deprivation of its previous occupant, John Oxenbridge, for refusing to subscribe to the 1604 canons. He held the parish until the outbreak of the civil war, when he was violently ejected by parliamentary soldiers. Surprisingly, Holyoake's patron was Sir Clement Throckmorton, whose family had a reputation for Puritan sympathies.<sup>95</sup> Little is known of Sir Clement's religious opinions, and his reasons for presenting Holyoake to the benefice are unclear. It is possible that he sympathised with Holyoake's style of ministry; but it is equally likely that he was not particularly discriminating in his patronage, in common with the majority of the local gentry.

Holyoake's ministry at Southam was recorded in the accounts of the parish churchwardens, which have survived for the whole period of his incumbency. These provide the most detailed account of the work of a High Church minister in Warwickshire. Unlike the majority of sources, they demonstrate the constructive aspect of the High Church ministry, rather than the negative effects of attempts to suppress nonconformity. Holyoake's ministry at Southam followed the lines which he set out in his visitation sermon in 1610: he enhanced the ceremonial aspect of worship in the parish, and improved the physical condition of the church. This tendency was evident in the first twenty years of his incumbency, but it accelerated rapidly during the 1630s. This was probably the result of the emphasis placed on ceremonial worship and church renovation in the visitations in this period, which spurred on his own enthusiasm for these policies.

Above all, Holyoake's residence at Southam was characterised by the acquisition of ceremonial artefacts for the parish church. Most

notably, the communion plate of the parish was improved and augmented. This process began in 1614 with the purchase of a new flaggon. In 1633 a new communion cup was obtained. The inventory for 1638 recorded "one silver cupp with a cover, and one with a plate and a case".<sup>86</sup> This policy was accompanied by the adornment of the communion table. In 1632 a new cloth was purchased to cover the table, and "matts for the communion table" were added two years later.<sup>87</sup> Alongside these decorations, the communion table itself was renovated and altered. The table was repaired in 1613. In 1634 it was surrounded by altar-rails, a year before this innovation was introduced widely in the region.<sup>88</sup>

The purchase of sacramental artefacts was accompanied by the acquisition of other items associated with a "formalist" style of worship. In 1605, shortly after Holyoake's arrival, the churchwardens of Southam purchased a new Book of Common Prayer. A second Prayer book was obtained in 1633. Other new books were added to the possessions of the church in the course of Holyoake's ministry, including a Book of Homilies and Bishop Jewell's Defence of the Church of England.<sup>89</sup> In addition, Holyoake improved the quality of the parish vestments. The accounts recorded the purchase of a new surplice in 1605. A second surplice, with a purple lace collar, was acquired in 1635.<sup>90</sup>

The additions which Holyoake made to the contents of his parish church were combined with a sustained effort to improve its physical condition. This policy began with the casting of new bells in 1615 and 1618. It continued in the following year with extensive repairs

to the church porch. Predictably, work gathered pace during the 1630s. The releading of the roof commenced in 1630, and the church and steeple were repointed in 1636. Between 1634 and 1636 the church windows were reglazed. In 1637 a second set of bells was cast and hung.<sup>91</sup> Alongside these structural improvements, Holyoake presided over the extensive redecoration of the church. This was pursued most energetically in 1636, when the churchwardens disbursed over thirteen pounds for "the Whiteninge and paynting of the Church".<sup>92</sup>

The finance for these improvements was raised through parish levies. An example of this device was recorded in the accounts book in 1630, when Holyoake announced a levy of twenty pounds to fund the releading of the church roof.<sup>93</sup> Inevitably, the major refurbishments of the 1630s increased the financial burden on the parish. This, in turn, led to conflict between Holyoake and certain members of his flock. In 1632 he presented seven parishioners, including a former churchwarden, Richard Haylop, to the archdeacon's court for refusing "to pay theire levies". In 1638 he obtained an order from the consistory court of Lichfield "about the paying of the money [which] was left unpaid last yeare".<sup>94</sup>

Such actions reflected Holyoake's determination to assert his authority in the parish, and his willingness to employ the courts in order to do so. This tendency was evident throughout his period at Southam, and was not confined to disputes arising from his efforts to repair and decorate the church. In 1622 the churchwardens of Southam were presented "for want of Certaine Books".<sup>95</sup> These

possibly included the Book of Homilies and Jewell's Defence of the Church of England, which were acquired in 1629. The accounts for 1630 and 1631 recorded expenses for a suit in the consistory court of Lichfield against two former churchwardens, Henry Chambers and Richard Haylop. Haylop was also presented in 1632 for refusing to pay a church levy.<sup>96</sup>

Clearly, Holyoake pursued a consistent policy of High Church reform during his tenure at Southam, backed up by the sanctions of the ecclesiastical courts. He was also committed to certain policies at a national level. His support for the authority of the crown was indicated in the parish accounts, which recorded expenses for bellringers on St James' Day between 1610 and 1625.<sup>97</sup> Subsequently, Holyoake was a keen supporter of the national policies pursued by Archbishop Laud during the 1630s. This was demonstrated in 1634, when he committed his parish to making a contribution to one of the Archbishop's favourite projects, the rebuilding of St Paul's in London.<sup>98</sup>

Another area in which Holyoake clearly supported the policy of the crown was the suppression of nonconformity. His opinions on the need to maintain uniformity in the church were set out at length in his visitation sermon in Coventry in 1609. The fact that he was chosen to deliver this sermon in a strongly Puritan city was an indication of his reputation as a determined enemy of dissent. It is reasonable to assume that he enforced his anti-Puritan views at Southam: there were no presentments for nonconformity from the parish in any of the surviving visitations between 1614 and 1639.

The only hint of dissenting opinion in the parish was an entry in the accounts of 1612 for "a bill of presentments for recusants", which referred to Catholics rather than Puritans.<sup>99</sup>

The ministry of Francis Holyoake demonstrated the potential impact of the High Church clergy in a single parish. Over a period of forty years he promoted a highly institutional style of worship; he emphasised the ceremonial aspects of religion, rebuilt and decorated the parish church, and upheld the discipline and authority of the established church. However, Holyoake's residence at Southam also illustrated the limitations of the High Church clergy. Despite his considerable energy, his impact was largely confined to his own parish. The essentially conservative nature of his beliefs, based on preserving the discipline and uniformity of organised religion, prevented him from exerting a positive influence across the region as a whole.

Ultimately, Holyoake's failure resulted from his conception of the church. While the Puritan clergy identified with the "godly church" as a minority of believers, Holyoake regarded himself as the instrument of the church as an institution. As such, he relied on this institution to impose the ideas he supported throughout the community. Outside Southam and the other benefices held by determined High Churchmen, the success of High Church policies depended on the position adopted by the crown, the resolution of the bishops, and the effectiveness of the tools of discipline at their disposal. In contrast, the "godly church" was sustained by the

preaching activity of Puritan churchmen, and the unofficial network of godly ministers and lay people across the county.

## Chapter Five: The Protestant Gentry of Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"The extent of Christs kingdome [is such] that none of what  
quality or ranke soever are exempted from his supremacy."

Ephraim Huitt, 1626<sup>1</sup>

The gentry of early Stuart Warwickshire expressed a wide variety of religious opinions, ranging from Catholicism to radical Puritanism. This diversity arose in part from the nature of the regional community. In her study of the county, Ann Hughes has identified 288 families as members of the gentry class, enjoying varying degrees of influence and wealth. No single family occupied a position of dominance throughout the region. Adding to this complexity, the majority of the county's most important families also held property outside Warwickshire, and maintained close contacts with other parts of England.<sup>2</sup> In this situation, it was inevitable that the region's gentry were exposed to a wide range of religious influences.

This chapter sets out the religious opinions of the Protestant gentry of Warwickshire. The first section attempts to determine the extent of "Puritan" and "High Church" sympathies among the county's leading families. It argues that a significant minority of families supported a distinctly Puritan version of Christianity, based on the preaching ministry of the "godly" clergy. This group was spread evenly throughout the region, and included representatives from all levels of

the gentry. Another, smaller and less organised group supported a markedly anti-Puritan and sacramental style of religion, and employed their influence to promote this in the local church.

The second section concentrates on the Puritan gentry. It argues that this group was implicitly at odds with the leadership of the established church. However, it only emerged as a serious party of opposition as a result of the Laudian policies which were introduced during the 1630s. Section three discusses the opinions of the "High Church" gentry. The final section speculates on the beliefs of the majority of families who can be placed in neither category. It argues that certain individuals, such as Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, drew on a variety of ideas to develop an eclectic position of their own. Many others were "moderate" Anglicans, who simply accepted the Elizabethan settlement without committing themselves wholeheartedly to either Puritanism or High Church Protestantism.

#### 1) Religious Divisions in the Warwickshire Gentry

By the end of the sixteenth century, Warwickshire had acquired a reputation as a centre of Puritan dissent. Writing in 1596, Bishop Bilson of Worcester complained that the county was infested with "men precisely conceited against her Majesty's government ecclesiastical", whose disobedience was comparable to that of the Roman Catholics elsewhere in his diocese.<sup>3</sup> The Puritan movement in



the region was supported by a sizable minority of the gentry. A number of important local families, such as the Lucys of Charlecote and the Throckmortons of Haseley, were at the forefront of campaigns to reform the established church throughout the reign of Elizabeth I.<sup>4</sup>

There can be little doubt that the Puritan movement continued to enjoy the support of many local families in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, it is difficult to assess the extent of this support because of the lack of campaigning activity between the accession of James I and the early 1640s. A minority of families, such as the Temples of Frankton and the Newdigates of Arbury, left personal papers which expressed their commitment to a Puritan style of worship, based on hearing sermons, reading scripture and cultivating a "godly conversation". However, detailed sources of this kind are rare. It is necessary, therefore, to examine a variety of other, more problematical material in order to estimate the extent of Puritan sympathies among the local gentry in the early Stuart period.

Potentially, one way to identify members of the Puritan gentry is by examining the introductions to their wills. It was conventional for a will to begin with a preamble describing the testator's relationship with God, which provided an opportunity for a personal statement of faith. However, the preambles to wills are of limited value in determining the religious position of their subjects. Many were composed according to a set formula, which rendered them virtually identical. They contained little in the way of distinctive religious content, and were compatible with both Puritan and non-

Puritan attitudes. Even when a testator expressed a commitment to the doctrine of predestination this did not necessarily indicate a sympathy for Puritanism. Although predestination was particularly important to Puritans, it was by no means incompatible with non-Puritan, or even "High Church" ideas.

The difficulty of using the preambles to wills as a test of "Puritanism" can be illustrated by the following extracts, taken from the testaments of two Warwickshire gentlemen. The first was composed by Sir Francis Leigh of Kings Newnham, who died in 1625:

"I comend my Soule unto ... God, who in the person of his Sonne Jesus Christe hath redeemed my Soule from the tyranye of Satan ... By the merrite of his bitter death and passion, and by the Sonne onely, I trust and believe I have remission of all my sinns and to be saved." <sup>s</sup>

The second preamble is from the will of Leigh's son-in-law, Richard Newdigate of Arbury, which was composed in 1678:

"I resign my Soul to God ... my gracious Creatour, in full hope and assurance, by the merritts of my blessed Saviour, to have my sinns pardoned, and that he will be pleased to receive me to eternall Glory." <sup>s</sup>

Both statements were firmly Protestant in tone. They both emphasised the sinfulness of the testator, his dependence on Christ, and his conviction that his sins had been remitted. Taken on their own, they provide no evidence to distinguish the religious outlook of the two men.

However, in this case it is possible to find other evidence of the religious convictions of the testators. For Leigh, this was provided in another part of the will itself. Leigh bequeathed four pounds to

the churchwardens of Church Lawford to purchase a new communion chalice, in recognition of his "bounden dutie unto Allmightie God".<sup>7</sup> The bequest suggests that he was attracted to a ceremonial style of worship. In the case of Newdigate, his surviving correspondence and journals make it clear that he was committed to "godly religion".<sup>8</sup> This example suggests that the preambles to wills can be unreliable as guides to Puritan sympathies. Where no other evidence is available, it is unwise to use them to determine the religious sympathies of their subjects.

An alternative method of identifying the Puritan gentry is to examine the relationship between "painful" ministers and their patrons. Again, it is necessary to exercise caution in evaluating this evidence. Among the gentry as a whole, it seems that patrons were not particularly selective in appointing ministers to the livings at their disposal. For example, Sir Thomas Lucy, a moderate but committed Protestant, presented Abraham Olney to his living at Charlecote in 1620. Olney was subsequently deprived as a Catholic recusant in 1626. The occupant of another of Lucy's livings was described as "neither preacher, nor of good life" in a Puritan survey of the county of Herefordshire in 1641.<sup>9</sup> This problem is compounded by the fact that it is only possible to discover the views of parish ministers in a minority of cases. This makes it difficult to trace a consistent pattern in the appointment of clergy to any particular parish.

However, the difficulty of interpreting the evidence of clerical patronage does not mean that it should be dismissed entirely. It is

clear that a minority of patrons were selective in their appointments. This tendency was particularly marked among the Puritan gentry, whose attachment to "painful" preaching and nonconformist services caused them to promote the ministry of sympathetic churchmen. Job Throckmorton, whose Puritan sympathies were recorded in other sources, was the patron of William Meacock of Haseley, who was presented to Bishop Parry of Worcester in 1614 for administering the communion to people seated.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, John Temple was the patron of Simon Moore of Frankton, who was suspended by Brent in 1635.<sup>11</sup> Another well-known Puritan sympathiser, William Purefoy of Caldecote, was one of the patrons of Richard Vines.<sup>12</sup> The most important of the region's Puritan gentlemen, Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, was the patron of nonconformist ministers at Alcester and Knowle.<sup>13</sup>

In the light of these examples, it is reasonable to assume that other patrons who consistently presented Puritan clergy to the livings at their disposal were sympathetic to "godly religion". One example of this tendency was Rowley Warde, the patron of Barford. In 1632 Warde offered the benefice to John Bryan, a nonconformist minister attached to Brooke's circle at Warwick. Following Bryan's departure to Coventry in 1644, he conferred the living on Thomas Dugard, the godly schoolmaster of Warwick. Robert Shilton of Sutton Coldfield was another example of a patron who seems to have favoured Puritan churchmen: Shilton presented "painful" ministers to his living in the town in 1617 and 1635.<sup>14</sup>

Other members of the Warwickshire gentry demonstrated their sympathy for Puritanism by forging personal contacts with "godly" churchmen. Since the relationship between the gentry and the "painful" clergy was at the heart of the Puritan ministry, it is reasonable to assume that families with close personal connections to Puritan ministers were themselves committed to "godly religion". For example, Thomas Adderley of Weddington "took such a love and liking" to Richard Vines, the Puritan minister of Weddington and Caldecote, that he allowed him to marry his daughter in 1635.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Thomas Puckering of Warwick attended regular meetings with John Bryan and the godly ministers of Warwick throughout the 1630s.<sup>16</sup>

Local gentlemen also indicated their preference for "godly religion" by exercising their influence on behalf of Puritan ministers. For example, Richard Knightly of Fawsley made a personal appeal to Nathaniel Brent to stay the prosecution of Samuel Clarke in 1635.<sup>17</sup> At a more mundane level, the gentry in the vicinity of Warwick petitioned the town corporation in 1636 to increase the maintenance of Richard Roe, the Puritan minister of St Nicholas, in view of his work as "an able and painfull preacher". The petitioners included gentlemen who were connected to other Puritan ministers, such as Robert Greville, Thomas Puckering and William Purefoy, as well as William Browne, William Combe and Robert Burgoyne.<sup>18</sup>

Further evidence of the extent of Puritan sympathies among the Warwickshire gentry survives from the period 1641-1642. According to Ann Hughes, Puritanism was the major factor that determined the allegiance of local families to parliament at the outbreak of the

civil war.<sup>19</sup> This view is supported in Chapter Nine of this dissertation. It is reasonable, therefore, to assume that those members of the gentry who were active supporters of parliament in 1642 were committed to the godly reform of the established church. In August 1642 William Dugdale compiled a list of local gentlemen who responded to the Militia Ordinance. These included men such as William Purefoy and John Temple who were connected with the Puritan clergy during the 1630s.<sup>20</sup> In addition, Dugdale named men whose Puritan sympathies were not recorded in earlier sources, such as Edward Peyto of Chesterton, Thomas Willoughby of Sutton Coldfield and Waldiva Willington of Hurley.<sup>21</sup>

From all the available sources, it can be established that members of at least 42 Warwickshire families supported the Puritan movement between 1625 to 1642. This amounts to 15% of the county gentry. Almost certainly, this figure under-estimates the true strength of Puritan sympathies, since it only includes those families for which clear evidence has been preserved. Even so, it demonstrates that there was a significant level of support for "godly religion" among the region's landed families. Given the highly organised nature of the Puritan community, this was certainly sufficient to exert a considerable influence throughout the whole of the county.

Geographically, the members of the Puritan gentry were not concentrated in any particular part of the county, although they were particularly well represented in areas around the larger towns, such as Birmingham, Coventry and Warwick. Socially, they were represented at all levels of the gentry. Their number included some major

landowners, such as Lord Brooke, as well as men of medium-sized estates, such as John Temple and Edward Peyto. Other Puritan gentlemen, notably Thomas Willoughby of Sutton Coldfield and Waldive Willington of Hurley, came from the poorest of the region's landed families.<sup>22</sup> In other instances, members of the Puritan gentry were drawn from the gentrified higher levels of the commercial and professional classes. These included the successful Birmingham ironmonger, John Jennens, and the lawyer, Richard Newdigate of Arbury.<sup>23</sup>

While it is possible to assess the extent of Puritan sympathies among the Warwickshire gentry with some accuracy, it is much more difficult to determine the level of gentry support for "High Church" Protestantism. There are two main reasons for this. First, it is almost impossible to deduce the religious opinions of local gentlemen from their patronage of the High Church clergy. In part, this is because it is much harder to identify High Church ministers than their Puritan opposites, since their institutional approach to religion made them far less conspicuous. Moreover, *many* of those ministers who can be identified as High Churchmen were not appointed by local families, but by the crown.

Second, it is impossible to deduce the religious sympathies of members of the gentry from their allegiance to the King in the civil war. Undoubtedly, those families which favoured a ceremonial, anti-Puritan style of religion tended to side with the royalists in 1642; but it is clear that many others were motivated by fear of Puritan radicalism, and were not necessarily committed to Laudian policies.

It also appears that religious issues were generally less important to the active royalists in Warwickshire than to their parliamentary adversaries: many royalists were driven by their personal loyalty to the monarch, and their fear of social disorder, as much as their desire to defend the established church. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter Nine.

As a result, it is impossible to quantify the "High Church" gentry in Warwickshire in the same way as their Puritan counterparts. The only evidence of their existence as a distinct group is provided by the detailed records of a small number of families: the Goodyears of Polesworth, and the Leighs of Stoneleigh and Kings Newnham. These records consist variously of correspondence, funeral sermons and donations to parish churches, which reveal that these families favoured a sacramental style of worship, based on the institutional church rather than preaching. Inevitably, material of this kind has only been preserved in a minority of cases; and it must be assumed that High Church opinions were more widespread among the gentry than the surviving evidence is able to prove.

However, even the limited evidence available suggests that the High Church gentry were able to exert considerable influence in Warwickshire. This was particularly evident in the case of the Leighs. The Leighs of Stoneleigh were the wealthiest family in the region, and Sir Thomas Leigh held the office of sheriff in 1636. Between them, the various branches of the family were patrons and benefactors of nine Warwickshire parishes.<sup>24</sup> These were dotted across the northern and central parts of the county, and included



Monks Kirby, Ashow and Kenilworth. Through their appointment of clergy, and donations towards communion plate and the decoration of churches, the family was able to promote a broadly High Church style of worship in these parishes during the 1620s and 1630s.

## 2) The Puritan Gentry

The religion practised by the Puritan gentry of Warwickshire corresponded closely to the pattern described in the sermons and books of the region's godly ministers. It was based on an intensely personal relationship with God, and a continual struggle against the forces of sin. This process began with a personal conversion to "true religion". This was a painful experience, which involved a fairly well defined series of stages. Firstly, the individual faced up to the utter degradation and hopelessness of his condition upon earth. This caused him to express "true repentance" for his sins, and to throw himself upon the mercy of God. Subsequently, as a result of God's Grace, he was able to enter into a truly "Christian" life, though he remained constantly aware of his innate sinfulness and total dependence upon God.

An acute anxiety about personal sin pervaded the writing of all members of the Puritan gentry. It was a recurrent theme in the poetry of Fulke Greville, the first Lord Brooke, which reflected at length on the "dark desolation" of his soul.<sup>25</sup> In a similar vein, the prayers of Richard Newdigate of Arbury invariably began with an

emotional description of his sinful condition. A typical example, probably composed in 1626, opened with the following lines:

"Most gracious & holy lord God, who hath bene pleased to comaund all those that are weary & heavy laden under the burden of their sinns ... Being miserably crushed & pressed with the weight of my transgressions, I humbly acknowledge my many & grievous sinns." <sup>26</sup>

The awareness of sin was not confined to personal meditations and prayers, and was frequently expressed in family correspondence. For example, Anna Temple of Frankton, writing to her daughter in Sussex in 1641, expressed her desire that God would "keepe us from the temptations of Sathan & the power of our owne corruptions".<sup>27</sup>

Alongside their awareness of personal sin, the Puritan gentry described their reliance on God's Grace to deliver them from their transgressions. This sense of dependence was most frequently expressed in poetry or prayer. Writing in 1614, Fulke Greville implored God to release him from his sinful and unworthy condition:

"Lord, I have sinned, and mine iniquity  
Deserves this hell; yet Lord deliver me." <sup>28</sup>

In another poem from the same period, Greville stressed the need to experience "true repentance" before God's Grace could be received. This involved the utter condemnation of one's sinful body and soul, based on the realisation that "God comes not till man be overthrown".<sup>29</sup> This emphasis on personal "mortification" was also found in the meditations of John Newdigate of Arbury, and in the prayers of his son Richard.<sup>30</sup>

The reception of God's Grace resulted in the "sanctification" of the individual, which enabled him or her to live as a "true Christian".

Above all, a "sanctified" life was characterised by unquestioning submission to God's will in all things. In 1625 Hester Jennens, writing from London to her brother in Birmingham, offered the following statement of her faith:

"I trust in God [to] be my Guyde in all my Affayres, for [in] him only doe I lay my whole trust, which I hope will never forsake me nor myne." <sup>31</sup>

Similarly, the letters of Anna Temple contained frequent references to her reliance on the Lord as "a wise and mercifull father".<sup>32</sup> Richard Newdigate, commenting on the "troublesome & dangerous" illness which afflicted his sister's father-in-law in 1635, expressed his hope that the Lord would give him "patience to submitt to his will whither in life or death".<sup>33</sup>

Naturally, the willingness of the Puritan gentry to submit themselves to the will of God was combined with an awareness that He was actively protecting and providing for His "children". This meant that God's providence was a recurrent theme in Puritan correspondence. In 1638 Anna Temple rejoiced that her daughter was safely delivered of her second child; she took this event as a sign of God's "great mercie" to the family, and a fitting occasion to consider "His continuall ordinarie mercies to us and ours".<sup>34</sup> Richard Newdigate, reflecting on the events in his life in a letter to his son in 1674, praised "Gods infinitt mercies in making us successfull in all our undertakings". He expressed his hope that his son would "goe on imploying divine assistance" in his own career, and would thereby enjoy the temporal success which the Lord had bestowed upon his father.<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, the intensely personal nature of "godly religion" caused its adherents to emphasise the doctrines of predestination and assurance. These doctrines provided hope for godly men and women who were overwhelmed by the burden of their sins. They encouraged them to persist in the ways of godliness once they were converted to "true religion", since their behaviour could be interpreted as a sign of their election. Richard Newdigate expressed this idea in his journal in 1626: he wrote that "the best way to know whether wee are of the number [of the elect] is to look for the markes of our sanctification", which were to be found in godly behaviour.<sup>36</sup> Thomas Dugard, preaching the funeral sermon of Alice Lucy of Charlecote in 1648, remarked that she "was much [attached to] those gracious practices whereby shee might make her Calling and Election sure".<sup>37</sup>

On another level, the doctrine of predestination reinforced the idea that godly Christians were the special children of God, who could expect to benefit from His favour upon earth. In this way the experience of providence could be regarded as a further sign of election. Again, this conviction was expressed by Richard Newdigate in 1626, when he apparently connected the success of his legal career with his status as a member of the elect. He concluded a prayer in his journal by acknowledging his gratitude to God "for thy favour for that parte of my life .I have already enjoyed for my election".<sup>38</sup> Newdigate's attitude was probably common to the Puritan gentry as a whole.

The "marks" of election were spiritual regeneration and the adoption of a God-fearing way of life. Ideally, such a "godly conversation"

was expressed in the constant worship of God, and a willingness to do His bidding in all aspects of life. In 1640 this ideal was set out by Robert Greville, the second Lord Brooke:

"If God shall give you to walke by this light ... you will not dispute whether you ought to be more holy on one day (as at a Sacrament) than at other times ... Pray continually; rejoyce evermore: blessed is he that feareth always ... So that every day, every duty, is to you an holy day, an ordinance divine." <sup>39</sup>

The practical application of these principles was described in contemporary accounts of Greville's life, which emphasised his constant devotion to godly sermons, Bible study and private prayer.<sup>40</sup>

The most important public expression of "godly conversation" was the practice of attending sermons. Richard Newdigate recorded this practice in his voluminous collection of sermon notes between 1626 and 1635. On one level, these notes reveal the scale of Newdigate's dedication to godly preaching: he heard sermons by at least five different Warwickshire preachers in the summer of 1630, and innumerable others during his visits to London in that year.<sup>41</sup> When he was resident in Warwickshire he made regular visits to the lecture at Nuneaton, and also attended sermons in parishes throughout the north of the county. On another level, Newdigate's notes demonstrate his attention to the sermons themselves. They were often extremely detailed, and frequently covered five or six pages. He was also given to adding his own comments at the end of particular passages, and copying maxims from sermons onto the inside covers of his books.<sup>42</sup>

A similar attachment to preaching was recorded by the biographers of other members of the Warwickshire gentry. Thomas Spencer, the minister of Budbrooke, stated that Robert Greville was a "great frequenter of Sermons". He commended Greville's careful attention to the preachers he heard, and his preference for "such men whose preeching was ... in demonstration of the spirit and power".<sup>43</sup> In the same vein, Thomas Dugard remarked that Alice Lucy was devoted to hearing "the Preaching of the Word". He lauded her as "an example of singular Reverence and Attention" when she attended sermons. Dugard asserted that Lady Alice demonstrated similar qualities in her own home, where she instructed her children to read to her from "godlie sermons" in the evenings.<sup>44</sup>

As well as attending sermons, the Puritan gentry were dedicated to the private study of the Bible. This practice was emphasised by Dugard in his description of Alice Lucy.<sup>45</sup> The close familiarity of the Puritan gentry with the Bible was demonstrated in the letters of the Newdigate and Temple families, which were littered with references to the Old and New Testaments.<sup>46</sup> It is clear that the members of these families regarded the scripture as a source of practical advice in all manner of affairs. For example, John Temple found it appropriate to quote from the Book of Solomon, complete with references, in a letter to his son-in-law concerning a minor financial matter in 1623.<sup>47</sup>

The Puritan gentry also had an appetite for religious books by contemporary authors. Preaching in Warwick in 1619, Samuel Burton remarked that such books "never hang long upon the Printers hand".<sup>48</sup>

The most popular titles were works of "practical divinity", which provided guides to the development of a "godly conversation" and its application in everyday life. In 1641 a treatise by Robert Greville, The Nature of Truth, showed that he was familiar with a large number of such works: Greville quoted titles by Samuel Rutherford, John Cotton and Thomas Goodwin, as well as Ephraim Huitt's Anatomy of Conscience (1626).<sup>49</sup> In his funeral sermon for Alice Lucy, Thomas Dugard attested that "no sooner could she hear of anie pious Book made publick but shee endeavoured to make it hers, and herself the better for it".<sup>50</sup>

It was possible for members of the gentry to obtain "pious books" from retailers in Coventry throughout the early Stuart period, although an attempt was made to clamp down on the trade during the late 1630s.<sup>51</sup> Even if a title could not be acquired locally, it was relatively easy to obtain it from outside the region. It is probable that Richard Newdigate bought books during his frequent visits to London. Other members of the Puritan gentry acquired works through their family connections in other parts of the country. For example, William Knight of Mosely wrote to his son in London in 1640 to request a number of godly volumes for himself and his friends. He made a series of similar requests throughout the 1640s.<sup>52</sup>

Another aspect of "godly conversation" was a strict concern for morality. In particular, members of the Puritan gentry were keen to uphold the injunctions in the Ten Commandments, which were emphasised in godly sermons and books of practical divinity. Naturally, the successful observance of these injunctions was taken

as a further sign of election. This outlook was apparent in the will of Anne Newdigate of Arbury in 1618: she made provision for her children to be "bred up in vertuous and Godlye lyfe", in the hope that such an upbringing would confirm their status as "5 of his chossen elect".<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the biographers of Robert Greville and Alice Lucy emphasised their moral strictness, and remarked that this was a clear indication of their election.<sup>54</sup>

Perhaps the most important precept of Puritan behaviour was the strict observance of the Sabbath.<sup>55</sup> Again, this reflected the extreme emphasis which was placed on Sabbatarianism in Puritan sermons and books. In 1651 Samuel Clarke recalled that Robert Greville "was very strict and carefull in sanctification of the Sabbath, both in publick and private".<sup>56</sup> This attitude was also illustrated in the correspondence of the Temple and Busbridge families. In 1651 Mary Busbridge, writing from Frankton to her mother, explained that she would have written earlier but had delayed in order to avoid breaking the Sabbath. In her reply, her mother commended this decision as an example of Christian behaviour.<sup>57</sup>

The natural consequence of the Puritan gentry's preoccupation with personal religion and godly behaviour was their rejection of ecclesiastical "formalism": Since they based their religion on their direct relationship with God, and the confirmation of this relationship in public and private life, they tended to play down the more formal and ceremonial aspects of worship. At best, they regarded the rites of the established church as a reminder of their Christian obligations; at worst, they saw them as impediments to



their relationship with God, or even as expressions of superstition and "idolatry". This position was summed up by Robert Greville in 1640, when he described the dangers of ceremonies which "carry an outward, visible show of humility, but give the heart leave to play the Trewant".<sup>58</sup>

In many cases, it seems that this rejection of "formalism" led the Puritan gentry to disobey to the canons of the church. This was most evident in their relationship with the nonconformist clergy. Of the Warwickshire preachers heard regularly by Richard Newdigate between 1630 and 1631, at least two were convinced nonconformists.<sup>59</sup> The members of the Temple family enjoyed a friendship with the curate of Frankton, Simon Moore, who was reported to Brent in 1635 for administering the eucharist to people seated.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the Jennens family of Birmingham maintained contacts with the city's nonconformist lecturer, Josiah Slater.<sup>61</sup> On a grander scale, Robert Greville entertained nonconformist churchmen in Warwick castle throughout the 1630s, and formed personal friendships with nonconformist ministers such as Samuel Clarke, John Bryan and Simeon Ashe of Staffordshire.<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, the religious practices of the Puritan gentry set them apart from the rest of the local community. This situation was reinforced by their tendency to regard themselves as members of the "true church", which they distinguished from the Christian community as a whole. In common with the godly clergy, Puritan gentlemen tended to use the word "church" to describe a body of individuals rather than the institutional Church of England. This position was stated most

candidly by Robert Greville in 1641, when he referred to "beleaving Faithfull Saints, for of these only all agree [that] a true Church consists".<sup>63</sup> Naturally, this outlook was encouraged by the doctrine of predestination, which allowed the godly to equate their election by God with membership of His "church".

It appears that the Puritan gentry understood the "godly church" in national as well as regional terms. Partly, this was because the concept of the community of saints had no regard for county boundaries: the elect, as a minority of individuals chosen by God, were dispersed across the nation as a whole. Equally, the members of the Puritan gentry, in common with many Warwickshire families, enjoyed contacts outside the region. Fulke Greville, the county's leading Puritan gentleman under James I, enjoyed an active career at court. His successor spent much of the year in London, and entertained friends from the capital at Warwick castle. The Temples of Frankton were connected by marriage to the Bushbridge family in Sussex. Richard Newdigate was frequently called to London in the course of his legal career. In these circumstances, it was natural for the Puritan gentry to regard themselves as part of a wider community of the "godly".

Furthermore, there is evidence that the Puritan gentry of Warwickshire felt solidarity with the "godly church" overseas. The idea of the community of saints, distinct from the Church of England, encouraged the view that godly Christians were united with their brethren on the continent. This view underpinned the political career of Fulke Greville, who supported an aggressively Protestant

foreign policy as a privy councillor under Elizabeth and James.<sup>64</sup> Predictably, the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in 1618 raised fears for the future of "God's children" in Europe. These fears were expressed in one of the prayers of Richard Newdigate in 1626. Newdigate beseeched God to protect "the whole church dispersed over the face of the earth", and to destroy the Catholic forces which had occupied the Palatinate.<sup>65</sup>

It would be wrong to depict the "godly church" in Warwickshire as a rival organisation to the Church of England. The majority of the Puritan gentry remained within the established church, and condemned any form of separatism. While they distinguished themselves from the mass of ordinary churchgoers, they regarded the institutional church as an integral part of society. Similarly, the majority of the region's families appear to have accepted the episcopal government of the church, at least until the mid-1630s. In 1626 Richard Newdigate prayed that the Lord would bless the entire hierarchy of the Church of England: "the most reverent archbishop, the reverent bishops & other inferiour ministers of thy word and sacraments".<sup>66</sup>

However, it is important to emphasise that there were significant differences between the religion practised by the Puritan gentry and the formal worship of the Church of England. In their emphasis on personal religion, the preaching ministry and the precepts of "godly" morality, the Puritan gentry were a highly distinctive group within the local laity. On the whole, they existed peacefully within the established church during the reign of James I, when church canons were not strictly enforced, and the authorities did little to

challenge the principles of "godly religion". It was only under Charles I, when more aggressively High Church policies were introduced, that the tensions between the Puritan gentry and the Church of England were fully exposed.

The ecclesiastical policies which were introduced in Warwickshire during the reign of Charles I were directly at odds with the beliefs of the Puritan gentry. The emphasis on ceremonial worship in the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in the 1630s encouraged fears of religious "formalism". This effect was compounded by the erection of altar rails in parish churches after 1635. Anna Temple, writing to her daughter in 1641, condemned altar rails as tokens of "Idolatry & superstition", and rejoiced that they were being taken down across the region.<sup>67</sup> In the same year, Robert Greville condemned the erection of altars as "unlawful" and contrary to the Gospel.<sup>68</sup> Almost certainly, these views were shared by many less radical members of the Puritan gentry.

As well as promoting "formalism", the church authorities attempted to restrict preaching activities in the region during the 1630s. It was shown in Chapter Three that this policy was generally ineffective. However, any attempt to restrict the availability of sermons was bound to antagonise the Puritan gentry, since their religion was based so heavily on "the preaching of the Word". Ironically, their anxieties were probably fuelled by the sermons of the godly clergy themselves, who clearly believed that their ministry was under threat. Despite the survival of Puritan preaching throughout the 1630s, Robert Greville wrote in 1641 that "with our bishops ... all

preaching is now out of season".<sup>69</sup> Again, it is probable that this perception was shared by the majority of the godly community.

Finally, it is clear that the renewed attack on nonconformity after 1635 provoked the resentment of many Puritan families. The attempt to clamp down on those "painful" ministers who refused to observe the rituals of the established church confirmed the general impression that "godly religion" was under attack. Many of the ministers affected, such as Simon Moore, Samuel Clarke and John Bryan, were closely associated with the local gentry. Many others would have been well known through their preaching in the region. Overall, the imposition of Laudian policies in Warwickshire convinced the Puritan gentry of the need for a thorough reform of the established church. Ultimately, this led them to support the cause of parliament at the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>70</sup>

### 3) The "High Church" Gentry

Unlike their Puritan counterparts, the "High Church" gentry of Warwickshire left only limited records of their religious beliefs in their personal papers. This fact is unsurprising in view of the institutional nature of High Church religion. Individuals who centred their religious life on acts of external worship, and placed only a limited emphasis on their personal relationship with God, were generally less inclined to express their religious feelings in private meditations and prayers. Equally, their attachment to the

institutional church caused them to place less emphasis on "godly conversation" and the application of spiritual principles in daily life. As a result, the correspondence of the High Church gentry contains relatively few references to their religious convictions.

However, it is possible to reconstruct the outlook of certain members of the High Church gentry in the region, who can serve as examples of their distinctive style of religion. Perhaps the most remarkable of these was Sir Henry Goodyear of Polesworth. Goodyear was the son of William Goodyear of Monks Kirby, and nephew of Sir Henry Goodyear of Polesworth. In 1595 he inherited his uncle's estates, despite a rival claim from Sir Henry's younger brother, William. Subsequently, Goodyear divided his time between Warwickshire and London, where he obtained a series of minor positions in the Jacobean court. He was constantly plagued with financial difficulties, arising initially from the legal dispute over his inheritance of Polesworth, and later from his own extravagant lifestyle. He died amid mounting debts in 1628.<sup>71</sup>

Goodyear's religious position was indicated by his circle of friends, which included the Warwickshire poet, Michael Drayton. Drayton was frequently entertained at Polesworth during the 1610s and 1620s, and dedicated a volume of poetry to Goodyear in 1619.<sup>72</sup> Although he was careful to avoid ecclesiastical controversies, it is clear that Drayton espoused a broadly High Church version of Christianity. In 1596 he alluded derisively to the disobedience of the Puritan clergy in Mortimeriados.<sup>73</sup> In 1613 he offered a highly sympathetic depiction of the old Catholic Church in England in Poly

Olbia. For example, he contrasted the "zealous" veneration of the saints in Catholic England with their sad neglect and denigration by the more "precise" and "foolish" members of the Church of England.<sup>74</sup>

Another, more celebrated member of Goodyear's circle was John Donne. Donne was a frequent guest at Polesworth, and maintained a regular correspondence with Goodyear over a period of twenty years. Like Michael Drayton, Donne advocated a High Church style of religion. He castigated the pretensions of the Puritan clergy in satires such as the Problems (1603-10) and sacred poems such as "The Cross" (1604).<sup>75</sup> As Dean of St Paul's, Donne promoted a markedly ceremonial style of worship during the 1620s. He also acted as a vigorous supporter of the crown's religious policies: in 1622, for example, he preached at Paul's Cross in defence of James' prohibition on the preaching of predestination.<sup>76</sup> In his letters to Goodyear, Donne expressed an unusual degree of sympathy for Catholicism: he referred to the Roman Church as a genuine "channel of God's mercies", inferior to the Church of England but nonetheless capable of reform.<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, only Donne's half of his correspondence with Goodyear has been preserved. This was published in a collection of the poet's letters in 1651. However, it is clear from the tone of these letters, and their occasional references to Goodyear's opinions, that Goodyear's religious position was essentially the same as Donne's. Goodyear's ideas were also recorded in his own surviving writings, notably his poetry in the early 1620s. These sources reveal that he was a committed High Churchman, who placed the formal worship of the

Church of England at the centre of his religious life. He was a zealous opponent of nonconformity, which he regarded as a greater threat to religion than Catholicism. Indeed, he shared Donne's conviction that the Catholic church was a legitimate part of the body of Christ.

Goodyear's hostility to Puritanism was revealed clearly in Donne's letters to him. Whenever Donne mentioned nonconformists or "Puritans" in his correspondence, he depicted them as a source of disorder in the established church. Thus Donne described the "self-homicide between the unconformed Ministers and Bishops" in 1612, and he referred to "in-obedient Puritans" in 1615. The casual tone of these remarks implies that this outlook was shared by both men. This impression is confirmed by a letter of 1610, in which Donne referred to the differences between "us and the Puritans",<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, Goodyear received parcels of Donne's sermons and writings throughout the years of their friendship, including works such as the Paradoxes and Problems, which were sharply critical of the Puritan clergy.<sup>78</sup>

Goodyear's attitude towards Catholicism was recorded in his correspondence with Donne. Donne first referred to the status of the Catholic church in a letter of 1610, and returned to the theme periodically until 1615. His last letter on the subject included a direct reference to Goodyear's own position: "that sound true opinion, that in all Christian professions there is a way to salvation (which I think you think)". Donne went on to develop this idea in the context of the relationship between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, making clear that he shared his opinions with



Goodyear. "I will not, nor need to you, compare the Religions. The channels of Gods mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of his graces".<sup>80</sup>

Goodyear expressed his attitude towards the Catholic Church in a poem composed in 1623. This was a celebration of Prince Charles' journey to Madrid to court the Spanish infanta, entitled "An Eulogie and admiration of his Jorney into Spaine". The positive tone of this work contrasted sharply with the widespread hostility to the prince's expedition among Goodyear's Protestant contemporaries.<sup>81</sup> The "Eulogie" contained a lengthy discussion of the Church of Rome and its relationship with the established church in England. In one passage, Goodyear asserted his opinion that Catholicism represented a "true church":

"The protestant divines that greatest bee,  
For number, knowledg, and for sanctity,  
Retain more charity than to presume  
Soe farr to say, the present Church of Rome  
Is not part of Gods church, or to denie  
A way to heaven to all that therein die.  
They only say that it should be reformed  
Since it is sickly, mangled, and deformed." <sup>82</sup>

Later in the poem, Goodyear extended this point to assert that the Roman Church agreed with the Church of England on the "most important points" of religion.<sup>83</sup>

With remarkable candour, Goodyear accepted the logical conclusion of his position in the "Eulogie": that England might one day be reconciled with the Catholic Church. Indeed, he looked forward to this event at some unspecified date in the future, although he stressed that Rome would have to reform herself before this could

come about. Once this was accomplished, "wee may with blessed unity embrace". Clearly, Goodyear regarded the proposed match between Prince Charles and the Infanta as a hopeful sign of this future reunion. On a grander scale, he also anticipated the reconciliation of Catholics and Protestants throughout Europe. He suggested that this could be achieved through a "full and universiall Councell" of the Church, which could "all our distracted Soules againe unite".<sup>84</sup>

Clearly, Goodyear's religious position was highly distinctive, and exposed him to allegations of popery. A least one such accusation was recorded in a letter from Donne in 1615, in which the poet expressed his anger that an unnamed party had accused Goodyear of "flexibility" in matters of faith. He advised his friend to be more guarded in his comments on religion in the future, and to avoid the company of known Catholics.<sup>85</sup> The details of this episode are unclear, and it is impossible to know whether the allegations against Goodyear were made in Warwickshire or at court. However, it is probable that Goodyear's hostility to "godly religion", combined with his marked sympathy for Catholicism, made him the subject of considerable suspicion among his Puritan neighbours in Warwickshire.

Another well-documented member of the county's High Church gentry was Alice Dudley, the daughter of Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh. In 1596 Alice married Sir Robert Dudley, the illegitimate son of the Earl of Leicester. Nine years later, following the collapse of his claim to inherit his father's title, Sir Robert abandoned Alice and fled to the continent, where he embraced Catholicism and entered the service of the Holy Roman Emperor. Alice continued to live in

Warwickshire until 1620, when she took up residence in London. In 1621 she inherited her husband's estates in Warwickshire; and she maintained close contacts with the county until her death in 1669.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout her life, Lady Dudley displayed a marked preference for a ceremonial style of religion. It appears that this preference was encouraged by the ecclesiastical policies introduced in the 1630s. In 1638 she bestowed sets of communion plate, including gothic-style chalices, to the Warwickshire parishes of Ashow, Baginton, Monks Kirby, Leek Wooton and Kenilworth.<sup>87</sup> She made similar donations to the parish church of St Giles in London, where she also provided "very costly, handsome [altar] rails to guard the Lord's Table from profane abuses".<sup>88</sup> The minister of St Giles, Robert Boreman, emphasised Lady Dudley's devotion to sacramental worship in her funeral sermon in 1669: he lauded her as an example to all Christians "to administer frequently the holy sacraments for the edifying and saving of your souls".<sup>89</sup>

As well as supporting a sacramental style of worship, Lady Dudley sought to enhance the status of the ministers of the established church. To this end, she provided additional income for the clergy of six Warwickshire parishes from 1621 until the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>90</sup> It appears that the beneficiaries of this support were men who favoured her own version of High Church Protestantism. Three of them, Thomas Stringfield of Ashow, Edward Mansell of Stoneleigh, and William Stapleton of Monks Kirby, were sequestered by parliament during the 1640s.<sup>91</sup> According to Boreman, Lady Dudley

herself suffered persecution during the civil war because she was "a lover and patroness of orthodox divines".<sup>92</sup>

Like Sir Henry Goodyear, Alice Dudley was accused of "popery" because of her High Church opinions. Boreman recorded that her enemies "blasted her reputation with their black tongues" during the 1640s, "not dreading to report that she was a papist".<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence of her attitude towards Catholicism. Her husband's defection to Rome suggests that she was exposed to Catholic influences during her marriage; but there is no reason to believe that she regarded herself as anything other than a loyal member of the Church of England. Perhaps the most accurate description of her religious position was contained in an anecdote recounted by Boreman: he stated that during the civil war one of her accusers, while accepting that she was not a Catholic, had insisted that she was "something like one".<sup>94</sup>

It appears that Alice Dudley's commitment to "High Church" Protestantism was shared by the other members of her family. In 1640 Frances Knyveton, her second daughter, donated communion chalices to five parishes in her husband's county of Derbyshire.<sup>95</sup> Dudley's youngest daughter, Catherine Levison, was commended by William Dugdale in 1674 for imitating her mother's "blessed works of piety and charity". In particular, she was responsible for rebuilding the ruined parish church of Temple Balsall in Warwickshire. Dugdale recorded that she "beautified [the church] very much for the use of the inhabitants there", and also provided an income of fifty pounds per annum to support its minister.<sup>96</sup>

The most influential of Lady Dudley's relatives in Warwickshire was her nephew, Thomas, Lord Leigh of Stoneligh. Lord Leigh was one of the wealthiest members of the local gentry, and served as sheriff of the county in 1636. He was also a leading royalist at the outbreak of the civil war. There is little direct evidence of Lord Leigh's religious opinions; but the material available suggests that he supported a broadly High Church version of Protestantism. Following the Restoration, Lord Leigh employed as his chaplain Thomas Allestree, a divine whose published works revealed a commitment to a sacramental style of worship.<sup>97</sup> Writing in 1670, Allestree described his patron's devotion to the memory of Lady Dudley, and the way in which he sought to emulate her in his spiritual life.<sup>98</sup>

Clearly, the existence of individuals such as Henry Goodyear, Lady Dudley and Lord Leigh did not constitute a "High Church party" within the Warwickshire gentry. It is possible that their opinions were shared by some other members of the gentry, but this is difficult to prove from the available sources. However, it is reasonable to assume that a small minority of the local gentry were attached to a distinctly ceremonial version of Protestantism, based primarily on acts of external worship rather than the preaching ministry. Unlike their Puritan counterparts, these individuals did not recognise themselves as a separate party within the established church, and were not organised as a distinctive community. Rather, they based their religion on the external institution of the Church of England.

#### 4) "Religious Moderates" in the Warwickshire Gentry

The Puritan and High Church opinions described in sections two and three represented extreme positions, adopted by minority groups in the Warwickshire gentry. Both positions were clearly defined, and reflected a characteristic concept of the church. They were supported by individuals who assumed an unusually active role in ecclesiastical affairs, and were therefore particularly important in the religious and political history of the region. However, this should not obscure the fact that the majority of the local gentry belonged to neither group, and were apparently unaffected by the religious controversies of the early Stuart period. Given this, is it possible to ascertain the religious views of the silent majority of the gentry?

It is probable that most members of the local gentry occupied a "moderate" position between the extremes of Puritanism and High Church Protestantism. The exclusive nature of Puritanism, combined with the high level of personal commitment that it demanded of its adherents, probably limited its appeal to a relatively small faction. This view is supported by the estimate in section one that only between 15-20% of the local gentry can be numbered as Puritans. However, it is probable that many members of the gentry came into contact with Puritan ideas, even if they did not commit themselves wholeheartedly to the ideals of "godly religion". Equally, it is likely that the majority of the gentry were familiar with the more ceremonial style of worship favoured by families such as the Leighs

of Stoneleigh, although they may not have embraced this style of worship with the same degree of enthusiasm.

Almost by definition, it is extremely difficult to find evidence of the opinions of religious "moderates" among the gentry. The members of the gentry who were most keenly interested in religion, and who therefore left the most detailed records of their religious convictions, were often inclined to ally themselves with particular groups within the church. Thus the majority of surviving sources attest to the beliefs of Puritan or High Church families, such as the Temples and the Leighs. However, it is possible to find evidence of the religious views of at least one Warwickshire family which belonged to neither camp. This was the Lucys of Charlecote.

The Lucys were one of the wealthiest families in Warwickshire, and held extensive estates in the south-west of the county. The first Sir Thomas Lucy was an Elizabethan Puritan, who presented a petition to parliament for the reform of the established church in 1585. On Lucy's death in 1600, his estates passed to his son, the second Sir Thomas, whose religious position is unknown. He died five years later and was succeeded by his eldest son, the third Sir Thomas, who resided at Charlecote House until his death in 1640. During this latter period, the various members of the family expressed a range of religious opinions which covered the whole spectrum of Protestant opinion.

The elder figure of the family was Lady Constance Lucy, the widow of the second Sir Thomas. Until her death in 1637, Lady Constance

divided her time between Warwickshire, London and her family house of Highclere in Hampshire. A "Life" of Lady Constance was composed by Elizabeth Lucy, the wife of her youngest son, shortly after her death. This recorded a number of typically "Puritan" qualities. Most notably, Lady Constance established a lecture in a parish in Hampshire "which had neither will nor means to maintain a preaching Minister". She bequeathed an annual maintenance of thirty pounds for this lecture in her will. However, it appears that Lady Constance also attached importance to the more ceremonial aspects of religion. For example, she insisted that her servants received communion frequently, and with an appropriate measure of dignity.<sup>99</sup>

Lady Constance's son, the third Sir Thomas, appears to have been remarkably eclectic in his religious opinions. Robert Harris, in his dedication to Sir Thomas' funeral sermon in 1640, remarked that he was an independent thinker in matters of divinity, "neither prostituting his owne, nor ravishing another man's judgment".<sup>100</sup> This description is confirmed by the details of Sir Thomas' life. He assembled a wide-ranging library at Charlecote House, which even included a copy of the Koran.<sup>101</sup> He also maintained a series of friendships with men of markedly differing religious views, including Lord Herbert of Cherbury, John Donne, Sir Henry Goodyear and Robert Harris.<sup>102</sup>

The most intriguing of Sir Thomas' friendships was with John Donne, with whom he maintained an occasional correspondence between 1607 and 1621. An early letter from Donne, dated October 1607, contained a philosophical discussion of the nature of free will and the origin



of the soul, topics which were presumably taken up in Sir Thomas' letters. The later correspondence implied that Sir Thomas took an interest in Donne's highly polemical religious opinions. A letter from Donne in 1621 enclosed a copy of one of his sermons, which Lucy had requested, and ended with a postscript asking his opinion on "my little book of Cases". This probably referred to a version of the Problems, a comic work containing scurrilous attacks on the Puritan clergy.<sup>103</sup>

It seems that Sir Thomas maintained a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards Puritanism during the 1620s and 1630s. He was not attracted to the pleasure-denying "mortification" and rigid morality which characterised many members of the Puritan gentry. On at least one occasion, in 1634, he employed minstrels and strolling players to provide entertainment at Charlecote House.<sup>104</sup> In the same period, however, Sir Thomas appears to have established a friendship with Robert Harris, the Puritan minister of Hanwell and a former lecturer at Stratford. This relationship was probably encouraged by his wife, Lady Alice, who was committed to "godly religion". Harris was appointed as family chaplain at Charlecote in the late 1630s, and preached Sir Thomas' funeral sermon in 1640.

Harris' funeral sermon provides further evidence of Sir Thomas' eclectic religious outlook. It is clear from the sermon that the minister was not always in accord with his patron. Harris recorded that "Sir Thomas and I were not alwaies of one minde", and described him as the "freest reprovcr that ever I met".<sup>105</sup> At the same time, the apparently genuine affection and grief which characterised the

sermon suggests that their differences never placed a serious strain on their relationship. Indeed, Harris asserted that Sir Thomas underwent a conversion to "godly religion" towards the end of his life, inspired by "the two schoolmasters, Luther and Calvin". He recalled his patron, in this later period, "decrying the vanity of all creatures, and abasing sinfull flesh before the Great God".<sup>106</sup>

The religious eclecticism of the third Sir Thomas reflected the disparate views of the other members of his family. Lucy's younger brother, William, was the minister of Burghclere in Hampshire. In 1621 he was appointed chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham. In the following year he preached a sermon at Cambridge which was widely attacked for its aggressively High Church content, and allegedly "Arminian" theology.<sup>107</sup> Subsequently, he became a committed royalist in the civil war, and was rewarded with the bishopric of St Davids following the Restoration. Although little is known of the relationship between Sir Thomas and his brother, William was an occasional guest at Charlecote House during the 1630s, and it is reasonable to assume that his High Church convictions influenced Sir Thomas' own religious views.

In complete contrast, Sir Thomas' wife, Alice Lucy, appears to have been a convinced Puritan. Her style of religion was described in her funeral sermon by Thomas Dugard in 1648. Dugard recalled her devotion to godly sermons, which she heard with "singular Reverence and Attention". He recorded that she was an assiduous collector of sermons and "pious books", and that every evening she appointed one of her children "to read from [a] godlie sermon in the presence of

the rest". She was also a meticulous student of the Bible, which she read every morning and evening.<sup>108</sup> In short, Dugard depicted Lady Alice as a committed member of the "godly" community, whose religion was based on "the Preaching of the Word".

Thomas Lucy of Charlecote demonstrated that it was possible for individuals to experience a wide variety of religious influences, without committing themselves firmly to any faction within the church. Sir Thomas was probably exceptional in his intellectual curiosity, and his apparent willingness to examine a range of religious opinions. It is likely that many other members of the gentry were simply "moderate" or uncommitted members of the Church of England, not strongly attracted to either Puritanism or High Church Protestantism. The members of this group were probably content with the existing forms of organised religion, and distrustful of any attempt to introduce radical change.

This position was illustrated by Sir Simon Archer, a gentleman antiquarian from Tanworth. Archer enjoyed social contacts which cut across a variety of religious groups. These included Sir Thomas Lucy, the Catholic Edward Sheldon of Weston, and the Puritan Edward Peyto of Chesterton.<sup>109</sup> He was also a friend of John Ley, the staunchly Puritan dean of Chester.<sup>110</sup> Nonetheless, Archer's neutrality in the civil war suggests that his commitment to "godly religion" was strictly limited. Sir Simon's network of contacts was shared by his friend and fellow antiquarian, Sir William Dugdale, who maintained correspondence with Catholics, High Churchmen and Puritans throughout the 1630s.<sup>111</sup>

Further support among the gentry for a "moderate" religious position was demonstrated in the period 1640-1642. This was particularly evident in the case of two Warwickshire peers, Spencer Compton, Earl of Northampton, and Francis Leigh, Lord Dunsmore. Both men gave guarded support to the early efforts of the Long Parliament to reform the Laudian church. As late as January 1642, Dunsmore was appointed to sit on a Lords committee to examine the charges against eleven bishops accused of High Treason.<sup>112</sup> However, at the outbreak of the civil war both peers became active royalists, committed to defend the "true Protestant Religion ... against Separatists of what kynd soever".<sup>113</sup> There is nothing to suggest that they were inconsistent in their beliefs. Rather, it appears that both men attempted to steer a middle course between the extremes of High Church "innovations" on one side and radical Puritanism on the other.

In many ways, royalism was the natural cause for religious "moderates" at the outbreak of the civil war. By 1642 the King had effectively abandoned the aggressively High Church policies of Archbishop Laud, and based his religious position on defending the pre-Laudian church from radical alterations. Essentially, this was the religious agenda adopted by the royalist party in Warwickshire (as is shown in Chapter Nine). Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that Spencer Lucy, the heir to Sir Thomas of Charlecote, was a committed royalist in 1642. The members of another 90 families gave active support to the King in the course of the conflict. Although it is impossible to prove, it is reasonable to assume that many of these espoused religious views similar to those of Northampton and Dunsmore, rejecting both Puritanism and High

Church Protestantism, and supporting a return to the pre-Laudian church.

## Chapter Six: Popular Religion in Warwickshire, 1603-1640

"If you repair to cities and more populous places, you shall sooner see the face of a Fair than of a Church; such tumbling, brawling and clapping of pews little beseems such assemblies ... If you look upon your country meetings, you shall find that many come more for man's laws than Christ's Gospel ... so they be at church and keep their own seat, it matters not what they learn."

Robert Harris, 1631<sup>1</sup>

It is comparatively easy to discover the religious views of many members of the gentry in their personal papers. Similarly, the opinions of many clergymen can be ascertained from their sermons. It is very difficult, however, to uncover the religious beliefs of the great majority of ordinary laypeople. In general, the best indication of the views of these people is preserved in the records of the ecclesiastical courts and the second-hand observations of the clergy. These sources are often imperfect. The records of the courts in Warwickshire are incomplete, and present at best a partial view of religious attitudes in the region. Equally, the descriptions of the clergy are frequently exaggerated or biased according to the perspectives of their authors.

It is within these limits that this chapter attempts to set out a general account of popular religion in Warwickshire. This account is not definitive. Rather, it explores the available sources in order to

create a general impression. The first section discusses the views of the population as a whole towards the established church. The second assesses the extent of Puritan sympathies and the influence of the "godly church" in the county. The third section examines the evidence of popular anti-Puritanism. It considers whether anti-Puritan sentiments were ever connected with support for a High Church view of religion, and whether it is possible to detect any popular support for the ecclesiastical reforms introduced in the 1630s.

#### 1) Church and People

When Anthony Burges, the minister of Sutton Coldfield, described the faith of the common people in a sermon in 1643, he remarked that "it may be defined better by ignorance than knowledge". He informed his audience that irreligion was so widespread "in all Parishes and Congregations" that it provoked him "to weep rivers of teares".<sup>2</sup> Burges' assessment of the sad condition of popular religion was shared by many of his fellows. The ministers recorded by Richard Newdigate in the 1620s and early 1630s frequently denounced the godlessness and superstition of the mass of the population.<sup>3</sup> This attitude was summed up by Robert Harris in 1631, when he condemned the majority of the laity as "a herd of Atheists, a drove of Turks, an abundance of enemies that conspire against the Church".<sup>4</sup>

Of course, such claims cannot be accepted uncritically. Many of the clergy who advanced them were Puritans, whose view of the world inclined them to exaggerate the godlessness of society at large. Their relatively narrow concept of piety led them to apply particularly demanding criteria of "religious" behaviour, and a correspondingly wide definition of "irreligion".<sup>5</sup> However, not all of the pessimistic descriptions of popular Christianity were made by Puritan observers. In 1619 Samuel Burton, the High Church archdeacon of Gloucester, offered an unhappy assessment of the state of popular religion in an assize sermon at Warwick. He denounced the general reluctance of people to participate in acts of worship, and their common preference for alehouses to churches.<sup>6</sup>

The claims made by Samuel Burton, and by Puritan churchmen such as Burges and Harris, raise an important issue which needs to be investigated. If their descriptions were based on fact, they indicate that the majority of people had little time for the established church, regarding it at best with indifference and at worst with resentment and hostility. This in turn suggests that the religious controversies of the period made only a small impact below the level of the educated classes, rendering the ecclesiastical reforms of the 1630s irrelevant to the mass of the population. For this reason it is essential to begin any assessment of popular religion by addressing the issue of "ignorance and godlessness" among the laity.

This is a difficult area in which evidence is limited. One possible source is the presentment of people to the courts for absence from church. Attendance at church services was enjoined on all members of



the community, and articles of visitation required ministers and churchwardens to present all absentees. Presentments for non-attendance were fairly common in the 1630s: a quarter of all parishes reported at least one person for the offence in the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1635 and 1639.<sup>7</sup> Occasionally large groups were presented, mainly in urban areas. For example, seven people from Coventry were excommunicated in 1635 "for willful absence from ... church, not comminge but once a yeare".<sup>8</sup>

It is improbable, however, that these presentments reflected the true extent of the problem. Very few absentees were reported in the visitations between 1614 and 1620, although they undoubtedly existed in this period; and in the 1630s most parishes reported only one or two offenders. It was remarked by contemporaries such as Samuel Burton, the archdeacon of Gloucester, that the enforcement of church attendance was extremely slack.<sup>9</sup> This was hardly surprising. In large parishes such as Birmingham and Coventry it was practically impossible to record every case of absenteeism. Between them, the two parishes of Coventry contained some seven thousand people, and to count every absentee would have required an enormous effort. Similar problems beset the church officers of the region's numerous small towns. Of course, not all churchwardens were diligent. Even those who were had to divide their time between other parochial duties, and most probably reported only the most flagrant offences.

While presentments for non-attendance offer an imperfect indication of popular attitudes towards the church, more reliable evidence is provided by sentences of excommunication. Most excommunications

resulted from the failure of people to respond to citations from the ecclesiastical courts, which followed their presentment by parish officers. Technically, excommunicates were completely debarred from the life of the church: they could not marry or receive the eucharist, their children could not be baptised, and they were denied burial in consecrated ground. Thus they represented a section of society which, either deliberately or through indifference, had failed to recognise the authority of the church and was officially cut off from the practices of established religion.

It is possible to estimate the number of excommunicates in Warwickshire at any given time by examining the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry. For this purpose it is helpful to focus on the deanery of Arden, which, unlike those of Coventry, Stoneleigh and Marton, was fully represented in all the surviving documents. Arden was the largest deanery in Warwickshire, and included roughly a quarter of the county's population; it covered the area from Sutton Coldfield to Nuneaton in the north, coming down as far as Solihull and Berkeswell in the south. All sentences of excommunication in the deanery were recorded in the episcopal visitations of 1617, 1620, 1636 and 1639, together with Brent's visitation in 1635.

On average, 5% of the population was recorded as excommunicate in each of these visitations. This figure takes into account the families of excommunicated persons, and is based on population estimates calculated from the hearth tax returns in 1663. The number of excommunicates was broadly constant throughout the period, ranging from 4% in 1617 and 1620 to 7% in 1635.<sup>12</sup> However, it

appears that only a minority remained outside the church over a long period. Only one in four of those under sentence in 1620 were described as "standing excommunicate" or "not in communion", indicating that they had been sentenced on a previous occasion. One in five were in this category in 1635.<sup>11</sup> This suggests a fairly high level of reconciliation, with people drifting in and out of the excommunicate class.<sup>12</sup>

Although the overall figures were low, the number of excommunications varied considerably from parish to parish and year to year. This reflected the differing levels of vigilance shown by the churchwardens in their original presentments. Nobody was excommunicated in the village of Shustocke in 1635, while this was the fate of 10% of the population of the comparable parish of Sheldon. In the same year there were only a handful of excommunications in the town of Mancetter, while 9% of the population of Solihull were declared excommunicate.<sup>13</sup> The situation changed in 1639 when a higher than average number of people were excommunicated in Mancetter.<sup>14</sup> Many parishes had a consistently low level of excommunications in all the surviving visitations. Others, such as Curdsworth, were generally above average.<sup>15</sup> Overall, it appears that the impact of excommunications differed significantly according to where people lived and the diligence of their parish officers.

The same irregular pattern prevailed outside the deanery of Arden. Many parishes had very few excommunicates. But others suffered such high levels of excommunication that they appear to substantiate the worst contemporary accounts of popular irreligion. Almost a quarter

of the population of Leamington Hastings was excommunicated in Brent's visitation in 1635.<sup>16</sup> As many suffered this fate in Foleshill in 1639.<sup>17</sup> The offences which led to these sentences were varied. In Leamington Hastings fifteen people were sentenced following an assault on the curate; others were punished for sexual crimes, unpaid tithes and failure to prove wills.<sup>18</sup> At Foleshill the majority of excommunicates were originally presented as "Negligent comers to Church".<sup>19</sup>

How should this evidence be interpreted? At the very least, it reveals that a sizable minority of the population was periodically excluded from the church, and that the number of people in this situation could rise to much higher levels in certain areas. Even a small number of excommunicates could disrupt the religious life of a parish: in 1635, for example, a man was presented from the village of Milverton because he "disturbs the Minister in tyme of divine service, beinge excom[municate]".<sup>20</sup> It should also be noted that the impact of excommunications extended beyond the minority who were under sentence, since it was technically an offence for other parishioners to keep company with them. This aspect of the law was spelt out emphatically in Bishop Morton's visitation articles in 1629.<sup>21</sup> Individuals were occasionally presented for having contacts with excommunicates during the 1620s.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, it should be emphasised that excommunicates probably represented only a fraction of the total number of people who felt little attachment to the church. It is likely that the overall level of excommunications would have been higher if parish churchwardens

had been more vigilant and consistent in their original presentments. The situation in Leamington Hastings and Foleshill indicates the potential scale of the problem. It is clear that in urban parishes such as Birmingham and Coventry, where the modest resources of the church were stretched over large populations, the courts could only reach a handful of those who took little interest in organised religion. Taking these factors into account, the figure of 5% of the population can be viewed as a minimum estimate of those people in this category. A more accurate figure might be nearer 10%, allowing for considerable variation between different areas.

Thus it is clear that a significant minority of people took little part in the life of the church. Beyond this, it is difficult to find direct evidence of the opinions of the men and women who fell into this category. It was common for contemporary preachers to assert that they were simply apathetic about religion. Thus in 1630 John Malin, the minister of Chilvers Coton, claimed that many people "care not whether [they are] of any religion or noe",<sup>23</sup> Josiah Packwood, preaching at Nuneaton in the following year, denounced "Atheisticall persons that thinke of neither heaven nor hell".<sup>24</sup> There can be little doubt that people with this casual outlook did exist. However, the limits of the evidence make it impossible to estimate the extent of such attitudes.<sup>25</sup>

Occasionally, individuals were presented for alleged blasphemies which indicated a degree of religious skepticism. In the visitation of 1620 a Nuneaton man was reported for apparently casting doubt on the validity of the Ten Commandments.<sup>26</sup> In 1624 a woman was

presented to the peculiar court of Stratford for asserting that "god did he knew not what".<sup>27</sup> Again, it is impossible to assess the extent of unorthodox views of this kind: very few quotations from "blasphemous speeches" have been preserved in the records of the courts, while it is clear that the great majority of such exclamations would have escaped their attention. However, it is reasonable to assume that unconventional speculations were entertained in certain sections of the community, especially in the urban centres and market towns with large mobile populations, which later proved to be fertile ground for the sects of the 1640s.<sup>28</sup>

While it is difficult to assess the views of those who were excluded from organised religion, it is even harder to deduce the opinions of the majority who participated in the life of the church. In the case of Puritan nonconformists it is possible to find valuable evidence in the records of the ecclesiastical courts. This material is considered in section two. But the courts provide little information on the mass of ordinary churchgoers who never came to their attention. However, the attitudes of these men and women can be inferred from general information about the condition of the church. This can be supplemented by an examination of the role of the church in society, and the way in which this role was likely to have affected popular feelings towards it. In this way it is possible to construct at least a basic outline of the religious attitudes of the majority.

It is clear that for many people a visit to church could be an ill-mannered and irreverent affair. Incidents recorded by the courts indicate that services were often disorderly. In 1617 a man from

Rugby was reported to Bishop Overall for pushing over a communion table.<sup>29</sup> Brent's visitation in 1635 received presentments from thirteen parishes concerning various forms of disturbance in services.<sup>30</sup> In Shustocke a man was reported for "laughing and swearing in the Church", while at Ladbrooke there was "an ordinary abuse of talkinge and wrangling ... by the inhabitants".<sup>31</sup> The indecorous nature of public worship was also revealed in churchwardens' accounts, which often recorded payments to officers responsible for keeping "disorderd persons" and animals out of parish churches.<sup>32</sup>

It is equally clear that the clergy themselves were commonly regarded in less than reverential terms. Of the disturbances reported to Brent, six involved the verbal or physical abuse of ministers.<sup>33</sup> The causes of friction were wide-ranging, including disputes over church dues and allegations of corruption and negligence on the part of the clergy. In 1636 a parishioner from Birmingham asserted that the minister "cared not for any man in the town".<sup>34</sup> Other church officers came in for similar treatment: in 1636 the churchwardens of four parishes reported that they had been the targets of abuse.<sup>35</sup> Overall, it appears that the clergy and their assistants were viewed with a degree of cynicism in many parishes. It appears that this was generally directed at individual ministers and churchwardens, rather than the institution of the church itself.

It remains true, despite the evidence of unruly behaviour in church and the friction which existed between certain clergymen and their flocks, that the church occupied a central role in the lives of most

communities. People looked to organised religion to provide services which could not be obtained elsewhere. In this way the church enjoyed a basic level of popular support, which derived more from its institutional functions than the quality of its religious ministry. At the most basic level, it performed the rituals of baptism, marriage and burial which marked the fundamental stages in the life of individuals. Above this, its festivals defined the various stages of the year, giving a formal structure to the life of whole villages and towns.

Alongside this role, parish churches played a part in maintaining the social structure of the communities which they served. The ownership and position of pews reflected the social status of families, members of town guilds and corporations. This fact is confirmed by the records of Lichfield consistory court, which are littered with petty disputes over church seating. A typical case arose in Nuneaton in 1629, when a long-running squabble over a pew culminated in a violent fracas in the church.<sup>36</sup> In 1637 the minister of Polesworth was accused of showing undue favour to one of the parties embroiled in a similar contest.<sup>37</sup> The strongest demonstration of the social importance of this issue occurred in Coventry in the mid-1630s, when the protests of the city's aldermen forced Bishop Wright to abandon a proposal to move their pews to a position of less prominence in St Michael's church.<sup>38</sup>

Another area in which the church was entrenched in society was the regulation of morals. The ecclesiastical courts were empowered to deal with a wide range of matters, including adultery, drunkenness



and blasphemy, as well as enforcing the prescribed rituals and doctrines of the church. In every parish the system of religious justice was conducted largely in public, from the announcement of a visitation to the performance of penances. It was inevitable, therefore, that the great majority of people would come into contact with this system at some stage in their lives. It was equally inevitable that church law would reflect the concerns of the villages and towns in which it was enacted, since the courts relied on parish officers to bring offences to their attention. In this way the courts acted as the expression and instrument of public morality.<sup>39</sup>

It is in the context of these various social factors that popular attitudes towards the church should be understood. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of people accepted the apparatus of organised religion as an integral part of the world around them. Almost certainly, most were aware of its failings, and many had strictly limited respect for their clergy. But they remained basically loyal to the religious institutions which underpinned their society, and which depended ultimately on their acquiescence. It is also likely, as John Morrill and other historians have argued, that many lay people had grown to enjoy the services of the established church by the middle years of the seventeenth century.<sup>40</sup>

Beyond this, it is difficult to assess the actual beliefs of the majority of churchgoers. It appears that anti-Catholic sentiments were well established, indicating that the bulk of the population at least regarded itself as "Protestant". On average, a fifth of all parishes presented at least one popish recusant in the episcopal

visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry, and the Gunpowder Plot was commemorated in every parish where churchwardens' accounts have been preserved.<sup>41</sup> Anti-papist scares were common during the political crisis of the early 1640s, most notably in Coventry and Warwick.<sup>42</sup> However, it is not at all clear whether anti-popery was an expression of popular support for Protestant doctrine or a crude reaction against a distrusted minority.

Indeed, it is almost impossible to speculate on the level of religious knowledge in the lay population. Articles of visitation required all parishioners to recite the catechism at least once a week, but there is no way to assess how strictly this was observed, or how effective it was at educating congregations in the essentials of the faith. It is probable that most people understood at least the rudiments of Christianity, if not the finer points of reformed theology. The main attempt to instruct the laity at a more sophisticated level came from the Puritan clergy, whose sermons placed particular emphasis on doctrines such as predestination and assurance. The impact of these ministers on the laity is considered in section two.

Outside the orbit of conventional Christianity, it is possible to find scattered evidence of the survival of folk beliefs and magic. At one level this took the form of festive activities such as morris dancing and Mayday celebrations. It appears that these practices were generally accommodated by the church, although they provoked the indignation of Puritan ministers such as Thomas Hall of Kings Norton and Thomas Wilson of Stratford.<sup>43</sup> At another level folk beliefs and practices took the form of magical healing and the casting of spells.

Incidents of this kind were occasionally reported to the church courts. A man from Sowe was presented "for usinge charmes" in the episcopal visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1614.<sup>44</sup> Two years later a couple from Stratford were presented for the same offence.<sup>45</sup>

The most interesting evidence of magical activities can be found in a sermon preached by Josiah Packwood at Nuneaton, attended by Richard Newdigate in 1631. Packwood warned his congregation of the dangers of magical healing, which he described as "witchcraft". His sermon included a passage in which he set out the reasons that people gave "for resorting to witches": they claimed that "wee never heare hurt of them", and their magical powers were derived from God rather than the Devil.<sup>46</sup> This part of Packwood's sermon tends to support the argument, advanced by Keith Thomas and others, that lay people distinguished between the practice of "white" and "black" magic, and that the former was generally accepted as beneficial and harmless.<sup>47</sup>

Packwood countered this claim by asserting that all witches were the servants of the Devil, who encouraged them to practise apparently "white" magic as a trick to ensnare innocent souls. It was the Devil's intention "to inlarge his kingdome by curing diseases". Paradoxically, he also contested that illnesses were sent by God as a punishment for sin, and could only be remedied by the exercise of true repentance and faith.<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, the occasion for Packwood's sermon is not clear. It was probably inspired by the activity of "witches" in the vicinity of Nuneaton, although there is

no further evidence of these activities in the visitations of the 1630s.

Further evidence of the persistence of folk beliefs and magic is provided in a number of pamphlets which were published in the region in the early years of the civil war. These contained lurid accounts of people making pacts with the Devil, which were allegedly based on real events. Invariably, these accounts ended with the Devil appearing in person to carry away his victim. For example, a pamphlet in 1642 claimed that a woman from Coventry was siezed by the Devil on her Wedding Day.<sup>49</sup> Clearly, the factual basis for these reports is extremely doubtful. Nonetheless, they indicate that belief in "black" magic was fairly widespread, and was fuelled by the atmosphere of religious excitement at the outbreak of the civil war.

In conclusion, a number of very general points can be made about popular religion in Warwickshire. It appears that a sizable minority of people took little part in organised worship, although the number who came into this catergory was much fewer than the accounts of contemporary ministers implied. Among the majority who went to church many had an irreverent attitude towards their clergy. Nonetheless, most people accepted the established institutions of religion as an integral part of society. It is difficult to discern the religious beliefs of the majority from surviving evidence, but it appears that many people identified themselves crudely as Protestants. Conversely, there is also some evidence of the persistence of folk beliefs and magic, although the extent of their influence is impossible to determine.

## 2) Popular Puritanism

It has been noted in previous chapters that preaching was at the heart of "godly" religion. The preaching activity of Puritan ministers provided the informal organisation of the "godly church". At the centre of this organisation were the lectureships in towns such as Coventry and Warwick, which attracted large congregations from surrounding regions. On a smaller scale, godly ministers encouraged the laity of neighbouring parishes to attend their Sunday sermons, and preached in regular circuits of each others' livings. It was this organisation, based on people "gadding" from parish to parish, which shaped the pattern of religious life throughout the Puritan community.

"Gadding" was widespread in Warwickshire throughout the early Stuart period. Parishioners were presented for the offence from Shustock and Alcester in 1614.<sup>50</sup> In the following year a case was heard in Lichfield Consistory Court concerning one Thomas Clarke, who was accused by the minister of Wishaw of persuading members of his congregation to "goe away from hearing him and gad to Curdworth to a puritan preacher".<sup>51</sup> Similar activities were reported in five parishes in the archdeaconry of Coventry during the 1630s.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, it appears that the practice of hearing sermons outside one's own parish was synonymous with godly religion. When a man from Handsworth was asked to define the word "Puritan" in 1629 he said that it applied to "such as runn a gaddinge to sermons".<sup>53</sup>

It is essential to emphasise the importance of gadding to the godly laity. Firstly, it allowed them to hear sermons from a number of "painful" ministers, who were only a minority of the county clergy as a whole. More importantly, it enabled members of the godly community to maintain contacts across a relatively wide area. The precepts of Puritanism led its adherents to regard themselves as an embattled minority in a sinful world. This outlook, combined with the demanding nature of the godly life, meant that Puritans were almost always a minority in their own parishes. For this reason it was essential that they had an informal organisation which cut across parish boundaries, extending the "godly church" throughout the county as a whole.

Another aspect of this organisation was a network of private meetings held to discuss sermons and scripture. Thomas Dugard recorded a series of such gatherings in the vicinity of Warwick during the 1630s.<sup>54</sup> It appears that the practice was also established in the north of the county. In 1638 William Pinson, a resident of Birmingham, was prosecuted in the High Commission for his involvement in a number of religious "conferences". The procedure at these meetings was described briefly in the articles against him:

"Divers and sundry p[er]sons of other families and places mett ... and you [Pinson] have taken uppon you to make a long prayer or prayer's, and to repeate a Sermon or sermons, and to expounde some p[ar]t[ic]les ... of scripture publiquely to the Company."<sup>55</sup>

In general, it appears that Puritan ministers supported activities of this kind. The meetings described by Dugard were attended by

members of the godly clergy and laity alike.<sup>55</sup> In his autobiography, Samuel Clarke remarked that such "conferences" were a means by which religious "knowledge was wonderfully increased".<sup>57</sup>

The extent of Puritan activity in Warwickshire was revealed by the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry in the 1630s, which placed particular emphasis on the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline. It is reasonable to assume that the level of dissent in this decade was typical of the early Stuart period as a whole. In Brent's visitation of 1635 nine parishes presented members of the laity as nonconformists, mainly for receiving the communion seated. This was repeated by four parishes in the episcopal visitation of the following year. In 1639 five parishes made similar presentments.<sup>56</sup> In addition to these cases, the court of High Commission prosecuted parishioners from Brinklow in 1637 and Birmingham in 1638.<sup>59</sup> Taken together, these incidents provide evidence of nonconformity in twenty different congregations between 1635 and 1639, which amounts to 14% of all the parishes in the archdeaconry.

The pattern of these presentments confirms the view that the godly laity were a minority group spread thinly over a wide area. The numbers of those presented was low, usually no more than two or three in a parish. Predictably, nonconformists were reported in urban communities such as Coventry and Birmingham, and adjoining parishes such as Sutton Coldfield and Sowe. But they were also found in many smaller congregations, including the villages of Whitacre and Bulkington. Geographically, the parishes were spread evenly across the archdeaconry, from Baddesley Clinton in the north down to

Stoneleigh and Leamington Hastings. It is very probable that this pattern was repeated in the third of the county which came under the diocese of Worcester, where godly ministers were highly active and a nonconformist tradition was well established.

Thus it is clear that Puritanism was a common phenomenon in Warwickshire. It was not confined to any particular region, but affected the whole of the county. Moreover, it must be assumed that the level of Puritan activity was higher than the figures suggest. The system of ecclesiastical supervision was far from perfect, and many offenders would have slipped through the net. More importantly, the courts only recorded those members of the godly laity who were active nonconformists, while this group probably represented only part of a wider body of Puritan sympathisers. When these factors are taken into account, it is reasonable to assume that a quarter of all parishes in the county were exposed to some level of Puritan activity.

By far the most common form of dissent was the refusal of parishioners to kneel to receive the communion. This was mentioned by six parishes in 1635, and a total of eleven parishes between 1635 and 1639.<sup>60</sup> Surprisingly, only one minister was directly implicated in the practice: this was John Gilpin of Knowle, who was presented to the metropolitan visitation for administering the communion to twenty people seated.<sup>61</sup> It was more common for churchwardens to report people for refusing the eucharist in the conventional manner in their own parish, or gadding to other congregations where they could receive it seated. In 1635, for example, a man was presented from



Baddesley Clinton because he "refuses to receive the communion kneeling but goes to another parish".<sup>62</sup>

While refusal to kneel for communion was the most widespread expression of dissent, a variety of other offences were reported as well. A man from the parish of St Michael's in Coventry was unwilling to stand for the recitation of the creed in 1636.<sup>63</sup> The same offence was reported at Harborough three years later.<sup>64</sup> Occasionally, ministers were abused for insisting on wearing the surplice, as was the case at Sowe in 1635 and Brinklow in 1637.<sup>65</sup> In 1638 the service of churching after childbirth was ridiculed by a couple from Birmingham.<sup>66</sup> Another expression of nonconformity was the refusal of parishioners to remove their hats in church, which was reported from Fillongley in 1635 and Harborough in 1639.<sup>67</sup>

What kind of people took part in these activities? The social composition of the Puritan community has been the subject of considerable debate in recent years. To some historians, notably Christopher Hill and Keith Wrightson, the appeal of "godly religion" was confined largely to the relatively affluent, "middling sort" of people. This group found the Puritan emphasis on social discipline particularly attractive, and used it to regulate the behaviour of the unruly poor.<sup>68</sup> This interpretation has been challenged by Patrick Collinson and Margaret Spufford, who argue that personal temperament, rather than wealth or social position, was the main factor which led people to adopt the "godly" lifestyle. As a result, the Puritan community tended to cut across social divisions.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, the evidence from Warwickshire is too limited to provide clear support for either side in this debate. The visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry, which contain the best information on local nonconformity, generally supply no details of the occupation of offenders. There is no evidence from any source on the religious preferences of those in the poorest ranks of society. It is possible, nonetheless, to draw some tentative conclusions about the social composition of the "godly". These suggest that "zealous" Christians were found in a wide range of occupations and environments, and that the division between Puritans and non-Puritans was not based on social distinctions.

Perhaps the best evidence of the social diversity of the "godly" comes from Stratford, which was torn by a violent struggle between the supporters and opponents of the Puritan vicar, Thomas Wilson, in the 1620s. Both factions drew support from a cross-section of the town population, including artisans, yeomen and the urban gentry.<sup>70</sup> Other sources confirm the relatively wide appeal of "godly religion". According to Samuel Clarke, the "most understanding Christians ... went but in Russet coats and followed husbandry".<sup>71</sup> An anonymous letter from Warwickshire, published in August 1642, asserted that "the yeomen of the County" were solidly parliamentary, implying that many among them were Puritans.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, many urban artisans had Puritan sympathies at the outbreak of the civil war, particularly in Birmingham and Coventry.<sup>73</sup> The corporations of Coventry and Warwick, which were dominated by successful traders and manufacturers, also had important Puritan elements throughout the early Stuart period.<sup>74</sup>

What caused these people to adopt the "godly" way of life? A number of factors can be identified. Perhaps the most important of these was the personal qualities of the Puritan clergy. Godly ministers were often more attentive towards their duties than other churchmen. This reflected their commitment to the preaching ministry, and their preoccupation with moral uprightness, which prevented them from falling into the vices which discredited certain of their colleagues. They also made a point of attacking the failings of less scrupulous ministers. The sermons heard by Newdigate in the 1620s and 1630s were replete with condemnations of non-residents, pluralists and "dumb idolls".<sup>75</sup> These sentiments appear to have struck a chord, and were commonly echoed by members of the Puritan laity. In 1637 a nonconformist from Brinklow described the majority of churchmen as "dunghill-Priests and Hedge Priests".<sup>76</sup> William Pinson of Birmingham denounced the conformist clergy as "drunckards & whoremasters" in 1638.<sup>77</sup>

The industrious ministry of the godly clergy was combined with the distinctive message of their preaching. This message was demanding and exclusive, and could only appeal to a minority. Indeed, this fact was acknowledged by Puritan ministers, who assumed that the great mass of the population was destined for Hell. But despite this, the ideas of "painful" religion were capable of winning converts. They provided a simple and coherent guide to every aspect of life, and held out the prospect of salvation in the next world. The stark contrast between the fate of the unrepentant sinner and the elected "child of God", which was mercilessly pressed home by preachers such

as Richard Vines and Josiah Packwood, was a powerful incentive for people to join the ranks of the "saved".

Another incentive was the prospect of belonging to a spiritual elite which enjoyed the special protection of God. The favour which God showed to His people, and His severe judgments against their enemies, was a recurrent theme in Puritan sermons throughout the early Stuart period. In 1631 Josiah Packwood declared that the Lord was a "sunne and shield" to His children, "and noe good thing shall be withheld from them that live a godly life".<sup>78</sup> In a similar vein, Samuel Clarke published an exhaustive compendium of examples of "Gods wonderful mercies" to his saints in 1646.<sup>79</sup> God's "mercies" were available to all members of the godly church, irrespective of their social status or wealth. There can be little doubt that this idea proved attractive to people from a wide range of backgrounds.

At a practical level, it can be assumed that the application of "godly" principles often improved the material fortunes of the Puritan laity. The sober, God-fearing lifestyle advocated in the sermons of "painful" ministers, and set out in detail in the guides to religious conversation by men such as Ephraim Huitt and Samuel Clarke, were bound to produce beneficial results. The habits of orderly behaviour, temperance and plain-dressing were advantageous to men and women in almost any occupation. More specifically, the network of contacts encouraged by membership of the godly church was ideal for the conduct of trade. Naturally, any improvement in material well-being which arose from these factors would be taken as

a sign of spiritual regeneration, encouraging its recipient to persevere in the godly life.

On the whole, it is reasonable to assume that the attitudes of the godly laity were similar to those of the preachers they heard. Their religion was based on attending sermons and reading the Bible, and they resented the "formalism" which characterised many of the services of the established church. This fact was reflected in the high incidence of nonconformity in the region. Instead they cultivated an intensely personal faith, centred on the daily struggle to throw off sin and acquire assurance of salvation. This was a cheerless exercise which permeated their approach towards life in general. Equally, the combative nature of godly religion fostered a spirit of resilience well-suited to a minority community.

The mental world of the godly laity was described in the recollections of Abiezer Coppe, who achieved notoriety as a Ranter in the late 1640s. Coppe was born in Warwick and spent his early years there; he left for Oxford University in 1636, and returned to his home town four years later. In 1651 he wrote about his religious experience in Warwick in the 1630s. There is no reason to suspect that this experience was unusual, despite his subsequent career. Indeed, Coppe gives a vivid and convincing account of the psychological impact of the main tenets of godly religion, including his early obsession with sin:

"In my evening and midnight prayer ... I did constantly in that part of prayer called *Confession* (with grief of soul, sighs and groans, and frequently with tears) confess over my sins." <sup>80</sup>

This struggle against sin was so intense that Coppe resorted to keeping a "dayly register" of his transgressions. He agonised over the condition of his soul, which he feared to be "besmeared over with filth and uncleanness".<sup>81</sup>

In common with the godly preachers he heard at Warwick, who almost certainly included Samuel Clarke and Richard Vines, Coppe devoted himself to the assiduous study of scripture. He recalled that he tried to read at least three chapters of the Bible every day, and committed "much of the Scripture" to memory. He practised private meditations and fasts. He based his life on "Zeal, Devotion, and exceeding strictness of conversation".<sup>82</sup> This behaviour accorded with the model of godly living described in the Puritan sermons recorded by Newdigate in the 1620s and 1630s, and formalised in the books of Ephraim Huitt and Samuel Clarke. Almost certainly, it reflected the general outlook of the godly laity in Warwickshire.

The preoccupation with sin, which characterised the personal religion of men such as Coppe, was also directed at the behaviour of other people. It was common for members of the godly community to condemn the impiety of their neighbours, especially in parishes where they enjoyed positions of authority. A particular target was drunkenness. In 1625 the aldermen of Coventry resolved to make regular searches of the city's alehouses to prevent excessive drinking and "the prophanacon of the name of God".<sup>83</sup> Two years later the corporation of Warwick directed the town's constables and churchwardens to make weekly reports on behaviour in taverns: they were to suppress all unlicensed houses and present drunks,

blasphemers and "all such as doe absent [themselves] from their parish Churches".<sup>84</sup>

It is no surprise that actions of this kind provoked hostility and ridicule. In 1622 Thomas Robinson, the nonconformist constable of Brinklow, was involved in a violent fracas when he reproved the "vices & abuses" of a group of people enjoying Mayday festivities.<sup>85</sup> A similar altercation took place in Stratford in 1621, followed by a series of libels against the "Puritan" leaders of the corporation.<sup>86</sup> These and similar incidents are discussed in section three. It can be assumed that such episodes had much the same effect on the godly laity as they did on Puritan ministers: they confirmed their separate identity and reinforced their opinion of the sinfulness of the rest of society.

Thus it is clear that the Puritan laity had a distinct religious and social identity, setting them apart from the population as a whole. They had a clearly defined set of beliefs, and belonged to a "godly" community with its own informal structure. Nonetheless, the majority of Puritans remained within the Church of England. It is possible, however, to find evidence of much smaller and more radical groups which existed on the fringes of the mainstream Puritan movement. These groups drew inspiration from godly religion but organised themselves outside the established church. As such, they were the forerunners of the radical sects which proliferated in the region during the civil war.

In the reign of James I the activity of separatists appears to have been concentrated in Coventry. In 1609 John Smyth, one of the leaders of the congregationalist movement, attended a "conference with certaine ministers" in the town. He recorded that his arguments for withdrawing from the established church were coolly received, although the meeting was "quiet and peacable".<sup>87</sup> Four years later Thomas Helwyns established a Baptist congregation in the town.<sup>88</sup> In 1626 this congregation, along with others from London, Lincoln and Salisbury, was in correspondence with the Mennonite community in Amsterdam.<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately, there is no further evidence of its activity before the civil war. No separatists of any kind were recorded in Coventry in the surviving visitations between 1614 and 1639.

Outside Coventry, the most extraordinary episode of separatism in Warwickshire occurred in the village of Cubbington in 1629. It centred on the activities of a certain Mr Grimswold, whose story was recorded by Samuel Clarke in 1656. Clarke stated that Grimswold became acquainted with John Canne, the celebrated separatist preacher, who persuaded him to abandon the church and practise private devotions with his family in his own house. Grimswold took this to such extremes that he eventually shut himself and his family away in his house, rejecting all contact with the outside world. This situation continued for several weeks, in which his "godly" friends, including Clarke, attempted vainly to persuade him to come out. Finally, the door to his house was broken down: Grimswold was found mad, half-starved, and close to death.<sup>90</sup>



At one level, Clarke's account is the story of an individual in the grip of religious mania. At another, it implies that radical separatists were active within the godly community. Grimswoold's original mentor, John Canne, was the leader of a separatist church in London in the 1620s. He departed for Amsterdam in 1631, where he assumed the leadership of a congregational group founded by Henry Ainsworth.<sup>91</sup> Clarke's story indicates that he spent some time in Warwickshire in the period before his exile, although the reason for this is unclear. His presence in the region is apparently confirmed by a churchwardens' presentment from Tanworth in October 1630, which recorded that a number of people were leaving the parish "to heare Mr Canne preach".<sup>92</sup>

The episode at Cubbington demonstrates that conventional Puritanism could mutate into more extreme variations. Clarke stressed that Grimswoold had been a committed Puritan, "acquainted with most of the godly Ministers and Christians thereabouts".<sup>93</sup> There can be no doubt that this background was one of the factors which made him receptive to Canne's ideas. In the same way, many "godly" Christians became separatists during the civil war. Clarke himself abandoned his living at Alcester in 1645 because some of his parishioners, whom he had "looked upon before as children begotten by my ministry", had become infected with "the ways of separation".<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Abiezer Coppe began his career as a conventional Puritan in the 1630s. This pattern implies that radical ideas were circulating in certain sections of the "godly" community before the 1640s, despite the predominantly conservative face of the Puritan movement.

The case of Mr Grimswold, and the Baptists in Coventry, involved attempts to set up alternative systems of worship outside the established church, which were based on clearly defined religious beliefs. However, it is possible to find other, less ambitious examples of separatism in Warwickshire. These involved the efforts of lay people in particular parishes to set up their own independent "ministries", usually in response to the failings of their clergy. These groups did not necessarily reject the established church, but sought to reform it by taking matters into their own hands. As such, the activity of these groups can be described as "semi-separatism".<sup>95</sup>

An incident of this kind was reported from Leamington Hastings in the metropolitan visitation of 1635. A certain Richard Walford was accused of setting himself up as an independent preacher in the parish. It was further alleged that Walford had attempted "to gett the ministers seate to read divine service" during a fracas in the church. A number of other parishioners were presented for their part in the disturbance; they were variously accused of "lyinge violent hands upon the minister" and abusing the curate "in words and actions".<sup>96</sup> From the evidence available, it appears that Walford's activity as a rival "minister" was short-lived. No similar incidents were reported from the parish in the episcopal visitations of 1636 or 1639.

The events at Leamington Hastings occurred after many years of negligence by the parish minister, Thomas Lever. Lever was presented to the living in 1619. He was subsequently reported to the authorities on numerous occasions for spending long periods away

from his cure, culminating in his prosecution in the consistory court of Lichfield in 1632.<sup>97</sup> Despite this, he retained the benefice until 1645, when he was sequestered by the County Committee. There can be little doubt that Lever's negligence provoked the revolt against him in 1635. This was possibly combined with financial resentments, since two parishioners were presented for refusing to pay their tithe in the same year.<sup>98</sup> It seems that the episode was a crude reaction against Lever's corruption, which resulted in an attempt to set up some kind of alternative ministry in the parish.

It appears that a similar incident occurred in the parish of Sowe, on the outskirts of Coventry, in 1635. This was also recorded in the metropolitan visitation. In this case, it appears that resentment of a negligent minister was combined with nonconformity and the establishment of a "conventicle". The visitation recorded that a certain Thomas Hart and his wife had made "disgracefull" remarks against George Dale, the vicar of Sowe. Their comments were quoted as follows:

"Askinge Mr Dale contemptuously if he did take up womans  
cloathes at the communion table to see whether they did  
kneele or sitt." <sup>99</sup>

The report concluded with the statement that "a private conventical is suspected to be held here amongst them".<sup>100</sup> Unfortunately, there is no further evidence of the activity of the Harts, or the conventicle, in the visitations of 1636 and 1639.

Like Thomas Lever, George Dale of Sowe had a long record of negligence. Following his appointment to the parish in 1609, he was

reported to the courts for ill-behaviour on several occasions; he was subsequently condemned as "an old base priest" by the Parliamentary soldiers in Coventry in 1642.<sup>101</sup> It is probable that the attack on him in 1635 was inspired by his personal failings as a minister, combined with Puritan objections to his insistence on conformity in the service of communion. It is possible that the "conventicle" in Sowe represented an attempt to establish an alternative ministry in the parish. If this conjecture is accurate, the events at Sowe were an example of semi-separatism, arising in the conditions of a particular parish, rather than a wider rejection of the established church.

### 3) Popular Anti-Puritanism and Support for "High Church" Policies

The Puritan laity were a distinct community in early Stuart Warwickshire, whose activities made them unusually conspicuous. For this reason it is comparatively easy to examine the "godly church" and its members. In contrast, it is very difficult to identify the section of the population which could be described as "High Church". There was no High Church organisation comparable to the network of sermons and meetings which underpinned the godly community. Nor did High Church sympathisers attract the attention of the ecclesiastical courts. As a result, any attempt to detect High Church sentiments in the population must be based on limited evidence and involve a degree of conjecture.

One way to approach the subject of High Church sympathies among the laity is to examine popular attitudes towards Puritanism. It has been argued in previous chapters that the High Church clergy based much of their thinking on opposition to the Puritan view of Christianity. It appears that this opposition was shared by many lay people, although their reasons were not necessarily the same. It was common for "godly" authors to remark on the hostility which they encountered. In 1626 Ephraim Huitt wrote that there were scoffers of godly religion "in every towne if not family",<sup>102</sup> The sermons attended by Newdigate in the late 1620s and early 1630s contained frequent references to the unpopularity of Puritan preaching.<sup>103</sup> In 1643 Anthony Burges, the minister of Sutton Coldfield, lamented that "to be a Bible bearing Puritan was a matter of scoffe",<sup>104</sup>

The accuracy of these comments is borne out by a number of recorded incidents of anti-Puritan activity. Between 1619 and 1621 Thomas Wilson, the godly minister of Stratford, was subjected to physical and verbal attacks by a section of his congregation. These were extended to Wilson's supporters in the town corporation, who were derided for their Puritan sympathies in a series of scurrilous satires.<sup>105</sup> Thomas Robinson, the nonconformist constable of Brinklow, was assaulted by a mob in 1622.<sup>106</sup> In 1629 a publican from Handsworth accused one of his neighbours of being a "Puritan", provoking a slander suit in Lichfield consistory court.<sup>107</sup> Indeed, it seems that the word "Puritan" was used as a general term of abuse in Warwickshire, as elsewhere, throughout the early Stuart period.

These anti-Puritan feelings show that there was common ground between "High Church" ministers and a sizable part of the laity. Since Puritans were widely unpopular, it is reasonable to assume that attempts to suppress them would have enjoyed a degree of popular sympathy. But did popular anti-Puritanism reflect positive support for a ceremonial style of religion? To answer this question it is necessary to examine the various factors which made people dislike the "godly" community. These included many elements which cannot be described as "High Church". For example, Puritans were frequently condemned for their alleged hypocrisy and self-righteousness, and their repression of "sinful" behaviour. However, there is evidence that these complaints were occasionally combined with positive support for the established church, and a distinctly non-Puritan style of religion.

In general terms, the popular image of a Puritan was a moralising and self-righteous hypocrite. This was the "true office of a Puritan" according to a satire against the godly aldermen of Stratford in 1621.<sup>108</sup> This perception was acknowledged by Ephraim Huitt in 1626, when he described the outlook of the majority of people towards the godly community:

"O say they, if they would be sociable, and now and then play the good fellows with us ... we would count nothing too deare for them, but this over-strictnesse we cannot away with." <sup>109</sup>

This resentment was compounded by the attempts of Puritans to regulate the moral behaviour of others, which earned them a reputation as "busy controllers". Thus Thomas Robinson, the Puritan constable of Brinklow, claimed in 1622 that he was persecuted by

people in his village because he "endeavoured diligently the reformation & suppression of vices and abuses".<sup>110</sup> Similarly, it seems that the Handsworth publican who called his neighbour a "Puritan" in 1628 was provoked when the man reported him for selling ale on the Sabbath.<sup>111</sup>

However, the image of Puritans as self-righteous meddlers, intent on spoiling the innocent pleasures of other people, was occasionally combined with attacks on the tenets of "godly religion" itself. Two of the anti-Puritan satires composed in Stratford between 1619 and 1621 contained mocking references to the writings of William Perkins, the Elizabethan champion of Calvinist theology. The first of these claimed that the town's aldermen had "red far in Perkins workes". The second parodied a Puritan advising his fellows on the best way to respond to the opposition they faced:

"Be not thou violent like them, but learne to reade in Perkins workes. They will teach thee patience." <sup>112</sup>

These comments imply that the opposition to the Puritans in Stratford was based on more than resentment of their "overstrictnesse". The anti-Puritan faction was familiar with the religious beliefs of their opponents, and rejected these as well as their "meddling" behaviour.

The Puritan style of worship could also provoke popular resentment. Objections to the religious behaviour of the "godly" were often combined with more general allegations of self-righteousness and hypocrisy. Again, this was illustrated by the events in Stratford.

In 1620 the opponents of Thomas Wilson, the town's Puritan minister, made the following catalogue of accusations against him:

"That the said Thomas Wilson was an ill liver, an incontinent person, that he had the french poxe by means of his incontinency with lewd woemen, and that he, being a minister, would not obeye ecclesiasticall lawes, Canons and constitucons." <sup>113</sup>

Clearly, the thrust of these charges was that Wilson was a self-serving hypocrite, whose insistence on moral discipline was exposed as a sham by his alleged liasons with "lewd woemen". But he was also accused of ignoring "ecclesiasticall lawes", implying that his enemies opposed his nonconformity as well as his supposed hypocrisy.

A similar combination of motives was evident in the incident at Handsworth in 1629. Francis Morris, the publican who derided his neighbour, Thomas Lee, as a "Puritan", was asked by Lee what he meant by the offending word. He offered the following definition:

"He is a Puritan that followes or hawkes to other churches than his own parish Church & carrieth a book under his arme and the divell in his bosome, and inventeth [ways] to doe his neighbour an ill turne." <sup>114</sup>

Typically, the publican's answer emphasised the apparent self-righteousness and hypocrisy of "Puritans", and their habit of interfering in other people's affairs. It is probable that Lee's "ill turne" had been to accuse Morris of selling ale and playing unlawful games on the Sabbath, since these activities were also mentioned in the articles against him.<sup>115</sup> However, Morris' definition also implied that he objected to Lee's style of religion. He ridiculed his habit of carrying the Bible; and he attacked his practice of hearing sermons in other parishes.



It seems that the incidents at Stratford and Handsworth were motivated, at least partially, by opposition to the religious practices associated with the "godly" community. This suggests a connection between anti-Puritanism and support for a non-Puritan style of religion. It was argued in section one that the majority of people were loyal to the established church as a social institution. Given this, it is likely that they resented the tendency of the "godly" community to set themselves apart from this institution, and to apparently reject its authority. This attitude was combined with their understandable hostility to the "over-strictnesse" and apparent hypocrisy of Puritanism.

The popular view that Puritans were "over-strict" in matters of morality was shared by the "High Church" clergy. High Churchmen such as Francis Holyoake and John Doughtie believed that godly ministers were excessively concerned with suppressing May Games and Sabbath-breaking, and should devote their time to less "trifling" matters. This view was summed up by Samuel Burton, the archdeacon of Gloucester, preaching in Warwick in 1619:

"I could wish that these painefull and zealous Preachers ... would for a time forbear these May-poles and Morrice-dances, and other such trifles, upon which they spend too much of their strength." <sup>116</sup>

There can be no doubt that this opinion was shared by many lay people who opposed the Puritan community. In particular, the attempts by Puritans to take down Maypoles provoked popular disturbances at Stratford and Brinklow during the 1620s.<sup>117</sup> Clearly, the potential existed for an alliance between High Church ministers

and grass roots opposition to the "over-strictnesse" of the godly community.

The principal attempt to create such an alliance was the Book of Sports, a royal declaration which listed a variety of pastimes which could be lawfully enjoyed on the Sabbath. This was introduced in Warwickshire in 1618 and again, with greater vigour, in 1633. There is evidence that it was greeted enthusiastically in certain parishes. Samuel Clarke, writing in 1646, recalled that members of his flock at Alcester were "encouraged by that book" to defy his ministry. Indeed, one of his parishioners even travelled to a neighbouring parish in order to hear the declaration, since Clarke himself refused to read it.<sup>118</sup> In 1662 Thomas Hall, the minister of Kings Norton, asserted that the Book of Sports had provoked an epidemic of ungodliness in the region.<sup>119</sup>

It is difficult to assess the impact of the Book of Sports on popular opinion in Warwickshire. In itself, the fact that the Book encouraged parishioners to defy the Puritan clergy only confirms that godly discipline was generally unpopular. It cannot prove the existence of positive support for High Church ideas. However, the prevalence of anti-Puritan feelings in the region, and the common resentment of churchmen who were "over-strict", make it reasonable to assume that those ministers who accepted the Book of Sports were popular as a consequence. This in turn may have encouraged support for a High Church style of religion, although this conjecture cannot be proven.

In more general terms, it is reasonable to surmise that the reluctance of High Church ministers to condemn all forms of "superstition" made them more popular within their communities than their Puritan counterparts. Similarly, it is likely that their emphasis on institutional religion allowed them to enjoy a more sympathetic relationship with their congregations. Since High Church ministers were not preoccupied with personal religion, and the need for "true repentance", they were less inclined to condemn their parishioners for every manifestation of personal sin. This point was acknowledged, with indignation, by Samuel Clarke in a sermon in Warwick in 1630:

"Many preach frequently ... but profitt not the people ... Others preach mercy to the benefitt [of the] broken hearted and discourage them in the way of godlinesse. Others preach peace to those against whom judgement is to be denounced." 120

There can be little doubt that preaching of this kind was more attractive to the majority of people than the aggressive, literally "damning" style advocated by Clarke. Again, this supports the view that the High Church clergy could have enjoyed the confidence of many ordinary churchgoers.

Can any other evidence be found to demonstrate the existence of High Church sympathies in the population? One source is the preaching of the Puritan clergy. The preoccupation of "godly" ministers with the dangers of idolatry, or religious "formalism", implies that this style of religion was seen as attractive to a significant section of the community. Ministers such as John Malin and Josiah Packwood regarded formalism as an endemic sin, and devoted whole sermons to

its baleful effects on the common people.<sup>121</sup> Clearly, one of the reasons for the hostility of the Puritan clergy to the "innovations" introduced in the 1630s was their fear that many people would be easily "seduced" by them.

There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that this fear was justified. Preaching in 1643, Anthony Burges conveyed the clear impression that many people had welcomed the innovations imposed in the church during the 1630s:

"Men are patient under all Popish burdens ... Consider how doting men are of the old wayes they have lived in [when] superstitious innovations were generally received." <sup>122</sup>

In 1662 Thomas Hall of King's Norton ventured a similar opinion. He commented that many lay people, having succumbed to the sinful practices encouraged by the Book of Sports, had been happy to accept "those superstitious innovations which shortly after followed".<sup>123</sup>

However, it is difficult to substantiate these claims from other sources. Surviving churchwardens' accounts do not indicate any clear increase in the attendance of communions during the 1630s. In some parishes, such as Fillongley, there was a steady increase in expenditure on bread and wine for Easter communion between 1630 and 1639.<sup>124</sup> But in many others the figures were roughly constant throughout the period.<sup>125</sup> Equally, there was no decline in the number of parishes presenting people for absence from church in the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry between 1635 and 1639.<sup>126</sup> Thus it is impossible to detect any general trend in popular attitudes towards the church during the Laudian period.

Nonetheless, there is evidence that certain ministers who acquiesced with the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s enjoyed the support of their congregations. One example was Henry Watkins, the rector of Sutton-under-Brailes. Watkins held the benefice between 1618 and 1649, when he was sequestered by the county committee. He was accused by three witnesses of reading the Book of Sports, sending aid to royalist forces, and neglecting parliamentary fasts. He responded with a plea that he had "always lived peaceably" with his congregation, except for the three "bitter persecutors" who testified against him.<sup>127</sup> It appears that the campaign to remove Watkins was instigated by a minority of Puritans in the village, while the remainder of his parishioners were content with his ministry.

Another non-Puritan minister who enjoyed the support of his parishioners was Henry Carpenter, the vicar of Holy Trinity in Coventry between 1633 and 1636. Unlike Henry Watkins, who seems to have been a moderate supporter of the established church, Carpenter can be identified as a committed proponent of Laudian policies. Indeed, he was commended by Nathaniel Brent during the metropolitan visitation of 1635.<sup>128</sup> In 1636 Carpenter announced his decision to leave the parish for a more valuable benefice outside the county. In response, his parishioners offered to augment his annual stipend by ten pounds.<sup>129</sup> Clearly, this gesture implies a degree of public sympathy for a "High Church" ministry in the town.

It is probable that the support enjoyed by Henry Carpenter was shared by other conformist and "High Church" ministers in Warwickshire during the 1630s. It is reasonable to assume that the

majority of people "lived peacably" with these ministers, and certainly preferred them to their Puritan counterparts. The prevalence of anti-Puritan feelings in the region indicates a degree of positive support for a non-Puritan, ceremonial style of religion. This implies that many people would have sympathised with Laudian policies. However, it is impossible to prove this conjecture from the limited sources available. Perhaps the best indication of popular support for a ceremonial style of worship would be found in a study of the persistence of Anglican rituals during the civil war and interregnum.<sup>130</sup> However, such a study is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

**Conflicts Within the Established  
Church in Warwickshire,  
c. 1603-1642**

**Two Volumes: Volume Two**

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## Chapter Seven: Religion in Coventry, 1603-1642

"The city [of Coventry] doth equall the most civilly governed  
and most eminently religious places of the Kingdom."

Samuel Buggs, 1622 <sup>1</sup>

Coventry was the largest and most important town in early Stuart Warwickshire. Despite the decline of the cloth industry, which had reduced its prosperity during the sixteenth century, it remained a major centre for the production and treatment of textiles. The town's position on the main route from London to north Wales, together with its road connections with Leicester and Northampton, also ensured its role as an important centre for trade. In 1635 the sheriff of Warwickshire described Coventry as a "great thorough fare town", blessed with "great trading and the benefit of travellers".<sup>2</sup> As well as having an industrial and commercial role, the town served as the administrative centre for the archdeaconry of Coventry. The archdeacons held their annual visitations there; and the presentments for episcopal visitations were usually collected in Coventry.

The government of Coventry belonged to the town corporation, which was dominated by a small group of families. These families were involved mainly in the textile industry, particularly the draping and dyeing of cloth. The corporation was fiercely protective of its own

rights, and keen to assert its independence from other civil and ecclesiastical authorities. Its influence in matters of religion was, however, relatively limited. The patronage of the town's two parishes, St Michael's and Holy Trinity, was held by the crown. As a consequence, the relationship between the corporation and the town's beneficed clergy was frequently difficult. This situation was exacerbated by the activity of a faction of Puritans in the corporation, who sought to impose their own style of "godly" Protestantism on the town.

This chapter examines the religious life of Coventry from the accession of James I to the outbreak of the civil war. The first section covers the period from 1603 to 1632. It demonstrates that the Puritan movement was a major force in the town throughout this period. However, there is evidence that the influence of "godly religion" was countered to some extent by the activity of the town clergy and a group of anti-Puritan laymen in the corporation. Section two considers the effects of Laudian policies in Coventry between 1633 and 1639. It argues that these policies enjoyed a degree of support, but failed to curb the influence of the town's Puritan community. Section three describes the events in the town in the two years preceding the outbreak of the civil war, when it emerged as a centre of radical dissent and parliamentary activity.

## 1) Religion in Coventry, 1603-1632

Coventry established a reputation as a centre of radical Protestantism during the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1588 the town was the probable venue of a "synod" attended by twelve Warwickshire ministers, who used the occasion to subscribe to the presbyterian Book of Discipline.<sup>3</sup> The "Marprelate" press, the source of a series of violently anti-episcopal pamphlets, was located in the town for a period in 1589.<sup>4</sup> Coventry's tradition of Puritanism continued under James I. When Samuel Clarke, the nonconformist minister of Alcester, recalled his education in the town in the early years the seventeenth century, he described it as "a place which at that time flourished exceedingly with religious ministers and people".<sup>5</sup>

The leading figure in the town's Puritan community was Humphrey Fenn, sometime minister of Holy Trinity, whose long career connected the presbyterian movement of the 1580s with the activities of the town's Puritans in the Jacobean and early Caroline period. Fenn was instituted as vicar of Holy Trinity in 1578. Four years later he was suspended for refusing to subscribe to Archbishop Whitgift's "Three Articles". He was restored in 1585 through the influence of the Earl of Leicester, only to be suspended again in 1590 for his part in the presbyterian "synod" of 1588. Eventually, Fenn was prosecuted in the Star Chamber, deprived of his living and imprisoned. But he returned to Coventry following his release in 1592, and remained active in the town until his death in 1634.

It is clear that Fenn continued to exert considerable influence in Coventry during the latter part of his career. He was one of the first contributors to the Library of the Free Grammar School, which was established in 1602.<sup>6</sup> In 1624 he was employed by the town corporation to "preach weekly on the Saturday ... during the pleasure of the Mayor and his brethren".<sup>7</sup> As well as his own preaching, Fenn took an interest in the training of young ministers. He provided "special encouragement in the study of divinity" to Julines Herring, the son of one of the aldermen, whose subsequent ministry at Shrewsbury ended when he was suspended for nonconformity in 1632.<sup>8</sup> Fenn also promoted the activity of "painful" preachers in Coventry. In 1628, for example, he was responsible for inviting Samuel Clarke to preach a weekly lecture there.<sup>9</sup>

The radical nature of Fenn's ministry in this period was demonstrated by the Preface to his will, which was published in 1642. The Preface contained a robust condemnation of episcopacy, revealing that its author had retained his commitment to the presbyterian system of church government. According to Fenn, the preservation of "worldly prelacy" in the Church of England was a sin against God: it was a "humane presumption" more dangerous even than separatism, and represented a "shamefull schisme against all the reformed churches of the gospell". Fenn went on to attack the "ceremonial bondage of our church". He advocated open defiance of the King and his bishops when they demanded the observance of "ungodly" ceremonies: he asserted that such ceremonies "are so far from binding that in defence of Christian liberty they ought to be broken".<sup>10</sup>

The activity of Coventry's Puritan community was felt at many levels during the reign of James I. The Puritan faction in the corporation promoted the principles of "godly religion" by appointing lecturers to preach in the town. The most important lectureship was established at St John's chapel in 1609.<sup>11</sup> The choice of St John's as a venue was significant: the chapel was owned by the corporation, and was therefore independent of the town's beneficed clergy. The importance of St John's was underlined in 1609 when the corporation began to renovate the building, which had been "out of repaire very much".<sup>12</sup> The first lecturer appointed to St John's was John Oxenbridge, the deprived minister of Southam. Oxenbridge, like Humphrey Fenn, was a veteran of the Elizabethan Puritan movement: he had attended the presbyterian "synod" of 1588 and subscribed to the "Book of Discipline".<sup>13</sup>

As well as the lecturer at St John's, the corporation employed two "assistant ministers" to preach in the parish churches of St Michael's and Holy Trinity. This practice was mentioned for the first time in the corporation minute book in 1611.<sup>14</sup> A lecture was preached on Wednesdays at St Michael's and on Fridays at Holy Trinity. Little is known about the assistant ministers during the Jacobean period, but it seems that they were less controversial men than John Oxenbridge and Humphrey Fenn, who only preached at St John's.<sup>15</sup> This was probably because the beneficed clergy were able to debar the more radical preachers from their pulpits. This view is confirmed by the events of 1627, when Samuel Buggs, the minister of St Michael's and Holy Trinity, refused to allow Samuel Clarke to

preach in either church, whereupon his lecture was transferred to St John's.<sup>16</sup>

The establishment of the lectureships in Coventry was combined with a wider attempt by the Puritan community to regulate the life of the town. According to Archdeacon Hinton, a group of Puritans in the corporation "pulled downe the picture of Christ from the market crosse" in 1609, asserting that it was "a monument of superstition". The image was replaced by a picture of Lady Godiva, which was subsequently removed and replaced by the King's Arms.<sup>17</sup> This story was also recorded, in two slightly different versions, in the City Annals.<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately, the men responsible for this incident are not identified in the surviving accounts. However, it is clear that they represented a committed and influential faction of Puritans who were determined to root out superstition and idolatry.

As well as attacking superstition, the Puritans in the corporation sought to impose "godly" morality on the citizens of Coventry. Naturally, their main target was the pernicious influence of the town's alehouses, which encouraged drunkenness, disorder and "the prophanacon of the name of God and his Saboth".<sup>19</sup> In 1614 the corporation appointed two night marshalls "to search alehowses for disordered persons".<sup>20</sup> This system was extended in 1625, when the aldermen decided to organise weekly inspections of the alehouses in their respective wards, and to "punish all such persons they shall fynde there according to the law".<sup>21</sup> This system of supervision was similar to the schemes introduced in Warwick and Stratford, whose



town corporations were also dominated by Puritans, in the same period.

Some of the Puritan citizens of Coventry were unwilling to conform to the rituals of the established church. There was a long-established practice among them of receiving the communion standing or seated. In 1611 James I sent a letter to the mayor and aldermen condemning this practice as "an insufferable disorder in a well settled church", and demanding the town's conformity.<sup>22</sup> The corporation responded with a petition to the King, which was answered with a re-affirmation of the original order: all the town's residents were to "receave the holie communion conformable to the order of the Church of England, expressed in the Booke of Common Prayer".<sup>23</sup> According to the City Annals, the King's actions in 1611 provoked "great trouble" in the town, which came to a head when "seats were made for the people to kneele on" in the two parish churches.<sup>24</sup>

The problem of nonconformity re-emerged in 1621, when the corporation sought to renew the town's charter. James refused to pass the charter until he received evidence that the town's parishioners were receiving the communion in the appropriate manner. A report was procured from Bishop Morton, who stated that dissent was confined to a small minority: "I am persuaded that there are not above seven of any note who do not conform themselves".<sup>25</sup> When the King requested a more detailed certificate, Morton instructed Archdeacon Hinton to report on the incidence of nonconformity in the town. Hinton confirmed the bishop's own assessment, asserting that "generally all do conform [to the practice of kneeling to receive the

communion], and it is rare at a communion ... to find one or two that offer to use any other gesture".<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, the adherents of "godly religion" enjoyed considerable influence in Coventry throughout the reign of James I, though the number of committed nonconformists was relatively small. However, there is also evidence of other strands of opinion within the town. In his account of the incident over the market cross in 1609, Archdeacon Hinton implied that the action of the Puritan iconoclasts was resented by certain members of the corporation. The replacement of the image of Christ with the portrait of Godiva was regarded as an "absurdity" by "many of the grave ancients of the citty", who directed that the King's Arms should be set up in its place. Moreover, Hinton suggested that the Puritan faction represented only a minority of the corporation, albeit a vociferous and highly active one. He asserted that "if the whole citty should bee governed by men of that faction it would be an odde government".<sup>27</sup>

The existence of a "moderate", non-Puritan group within Coventry is indicated by the bequests of the some of the town's leading residents. In 1625 James Harwell, a mercer, bequeathed £20 towards the communion plate of St Michael's church. Harwell's brother, Henry, had served as mayor in 1619.<sup>28</sup> Isaac Walden, a draper who was mayor in 1621, and whose brother held the office in 1627, bequeathed £20 to provide "four boles of silver, haveing covers, to be set on the communion table" of St Michael's.<sup>29</sup> These bequests imply that certain members of the town's most prominent families supported a

non-Puritan style of religion, and placed at least as much emphasis on the ceremonial aspects of worship as on preaching.

Undoubtedly, the most important opponents of the Puritan faction in Coventry were the town's beneficed clergy. William Hinton, the vicar of St Michael's and archdeacon of Coventry, was the most active campaigner against nonconformity before the 1620s. Hinton was instituted as vicar of St Michael's in 1583, and archdeacon in the following year; he resigned his benefice in 1623, but continued to serve as archdeacon until his death in 1631. In 1609 he invited Francis Holyoake of Southam to preach an aggressively anti-Puritan sermon in Coventry, which provoked controversy and "tumultuous rumours". When Holyoake's sermon was published in the following year, Hinton used the Introduction to castigate the town's nonconformists as "giddie heads".<sup>30</sup> Hinton also played a major role in the controversy about the communion in 1611. He was responsible for erecting kneeling boards in St Michael's, and preached a sermon against the practice of standing for communion in the same year.<sup>31</sup>

Between 1618 and 1626 the benefice of Holy Trinity was held by John Staresmore. There is some evidence that Staresmore, like William Hinton, supported a ceremonial and anti-Puritan style of religion. His ministry was marked by a strong commitment to the decoration and repair of the parish church. In 1620 the church "was whited all over, & the pulpitt was new paynted & the font ... paynted likewise".<sup>32</sup> The church was extensively re-leaded in 1622.<sup>33</sup> A year later, the churchwardens made a payment of £16 for the renovation of the steeple.<sup>34</sup> These refurbishments were accompanied by an attempt

to improve the ceremonial artefacts of the parish. In 1620 the churchwardens purchased a new surplice with a fine lace collar. In the following year, they recorded expenses for "paynting and writing at the Comunion Table".<sup>35</sup>

The best documented and most influential minister in Coventry during the 1620s was Samuel Buggs, whose career was characterised by his opposition to the town's Puritan faction. In 1616 Buggs was appointed to preach the Wednesday lecture at St Michael's. He succeeded Hinton as minister of the parish in 1623; and in 1626 he also acquired the living of Holy Trinity. Buggs retained both benefices until his death in 1633. Throughout his career, Buggs was careful to cultivate the support of the corporation, despite the continued activity of its Puritan members. For example, he dedicated one of his published sermons, Davids Strait (1621), to the mayor and aldermen of the town.<sup>36</sup> Buggs' connections with the members of the corporation allowed him to challenge the Puritans in his congregation with a degree of effectiveness throughout his ministry.

Samuel Buggs presented his religious opinions in two published works: Davids Strait, a sermon preached at Paul's Cross in London in 1621, and The Mid-land Soldier, a military sermon preached in Coventry in 1622. Both sermons were notable for their strong emphasis on the authority of the crown and the need to preserve discipline in the established church. Buggs described the King as "the one sacred person ... whom God hath chosen to be over us".<sup>37</sup> He commended the rites of the Church of England as essential to the decency and order of religion, and condemned any "stiffe-necked or stiffe-hammed

Schismaticke" who refused to observe them "out of opposition to the order and discipline of the church". Similarly, he attacked the observance of unauthorised fasts by Puritans as vanity and "hypocrisie".<sup>39</sup>

Buggs' hostility to the Puritan movement in Coventry was exemplified by his treatment of Samuel Clarke. In April 1628 the corporation offered Clarke an annual stipend of £20 to preach a weekly lecture in the town.<sup>39</sup> According to Clarke's autobiography, this offer was made on the initiative of Humphrey Fenn and the mayor, Richard Clarke. Clarke recalled that he was "entertained with much love and kindness" when he arrived in the town, and "for a while I exercised my ministry". His position was then challenged when "Dr Buggs ... professed himself my enemy". Buggs barred the new lecturer from the pulpits of St Michael's and Holy Trinity, and presented him for nonconformity to Bishop Morton.<sup>40</sup> Clarke was forced to leave the town in 1629, and his lectureship was formally ended by the corporation in June 1630.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that the conflict between Buggs and Clarke was part of a wider struggle between the Puritan and non-Puritan factions in Coventry. According to Clarke's autobiography, he continued to enjoy the support of the mayor and some of the aldermen following his exclusion from the two parish churches. They ensured that his lectures continued in St John's chapel, which seems to have served briefly as a centre of opposition to Buggs' authority. Buggs also enjoyed the support of a faction within the town. Clarke recalled that the minister was able to send "spies" to report on his

activities at St John's. These messengers informed Buggs of "some expressions" that he had used in his sermons and prayers, which apparently formed the basis of his presentment to Bishop Morton.<sup>42</sup>

Ultimately, it was the support of Buggs' allies in the corporation, rather than the sanctions of the ecclesiastical courts, that forced Clarke to abandon his lectureship. Following his presentment to Morton, Clarke recalled that "some of the aldermen flocked to me, pretending to spend much money before I should be put down". However, the influence of this group proved to be limited and short-lived. In November 1628 a new mayor, Henry Million, was elected. According to Clarke, "the new mayor ... was a great friend to Dr Buggs". His election meant that "the zeal of the aldermen in standing for me ... was much cooled, whereupon my lecture fell to the ground".<sup>43</sup> It seems that Henry Million was a consistent opponent of the Puritan community in Coventry: in August 1642, as a deputy lieutenant for the King, he led the struggle against the parliamentary faction in the town.<sup>44</sup>

The expulsion of Samuel Clarke was followed by a brief period in which Samuel Buggs and his supporters appear to have held sway in Coventry. Henry Million was succeeded as mayor by John Clarke, who also served as a deputy lieutenant for the King in 1642.<sup>45</sup> In November 1629 Buggs was appointed to preach the Friday lecture at Holy Trinity.<sup>46</sup> However, the cordial relationship between the minister and the corporation ended in 1632, when a new controversy arose over the appointment of a lecturer in St Michael's church. Led by the mayor, William Jesson, the corporation petitioned Bishop

Morton to allow the appointment of a new lecturer, asserting that "wee are a great people & have but one vicar".<sup>47</sup> The Bishop responded favourably, and instructed Buggs to accept the request.<sup>48</sup> There followed a period of negotiation between Buggs and the corporation, resulting in the appointment of Simon Wastell as a lecturer in 1633.

The terms negotiated by Buggs for the selection of the new lecturer demonstrated his determination to prevent the appointment of a nonconformist. He insisted that the lecturer should serve for a trial period of one month before his appointment. After this period, the candidate could be rejected if "Dr Buggs can make just excepcon against him". Once he was appointed, the lecturer "shall reade prayers in the church where he preacheth ... and serve according to the canon to show his conformitie". These conditions were accepted formally by the corporation in February 1633, with the provision that they "should continue inviolable forever".<sup>49</sup> This decision represented a considerable success for Buggs in the final year of his ministry, and reflected his continuing support among a section of the corporation.

As well as his conflict with the Puritan community, Buggs' ministry was notable for his commitment to the decoration and improvement of Coventry's parish churches. This policy is clear from the churchwardens' accounts of Holy Trinity. In 1627 the chancel of Holy Trinity was extensively refurbished. In the same year, the churchwardens recorded a payment to a goldsmith for "amending one of the Comunion Cupps, and the Cover thereof". In 1628 the church

acquired a new communion table, and a decorative carpet to lay around it.<sup>50</sup> The most dramatic alteration was made in 1632, when an organ was installed in the church.<sup>51</sup> Two years after his death, Buggs' achievement in beautifying the town's churches was remarked by Nathaniel Brent in the report of his metropolitan visitation. Brent wrote that "the two churches (in one of which there is a fair pair of organs) are very beautiful and well kept".<sup>52</sup>

Clearly, Samuel Buggs was an effective proponent of an anti-Puritan style of religion in Coventry during the 1620s and early 1630s. However, it must be emphasised that the Puritan community remained active throughout this period, and was still a potent force when Buggs died in 1633. The corporation minute book records that Humphry Fenn was still preaching at St John's chapel in 1631.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the failure of Buggs to challenge Fenn's ministry indicates the limits of his influence. Similarly, it seems that a minority of the town's population remained firmly committed to nonconformist practices. In 1630 Buggs was obliged to order his parishioners to "sit uncovered" during services.<sup>54</sup> According to the City Annals, he found it necessary in 1631 to "plead for the keeping of Christ[mas] in the pulpitt".<sup>55</sup> Coventry thus remained divided in religious matters at the beginning of the Laudian period.



## 2) The Impact of Laudian Policies in Coventry, 1633-1639

The religious life of Coventry was affected by a number of changes during the early 1630s. Samuel Buggs died in 1633, and his two benefices were divided. William Panting succeeded to the living of St Michael's, and Henry Carpenter became the new minister of Holy Trinity. Humphrey Fenn, the leader of the town's "godly" community, died the following year. At a higher level, Robert Wright replaced Thomas Morton as Bishop of Lichfield in 1632. Wright's arrival coincided with the emergence of a new, aggressively anti-Puritan leadership in the national church, which was confirmed by the elevation of William Laud to Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. This new situation meant that the Puritan faction in Coventry faced a renewed challenge during the 1630s.

Given this, it is perhaps surprising that there were few outbreaks of religious conflict in Coventry between 1632 and 1640. This can be explained by a combination of factors. First, the town corporation was never completely dominated by the Puritan faction during the 1630s, despite the influence of a minority of committed nonconformists. Indeed, there is evidence that certain members of the corporation were sympathetic to Laudian policies. Second, the beneficed clergy proved to be flexible and pragmatic in their implementation of Laudian reforms, although there can be no doubt that they supported a "High Church" style of religion. Finally, Bishop Wright demonstrated considerable caution in his dealings with the town, and failed to implement national policies with much vigour.

The leading lay members of the Puritan faction in Coventry during the 1630s were John Barker and Thomas Basnet. Barker served as mayor in 1635, and Basnet in 1637. The two men acted as deputy lieutenants for Lord Brooke at the outbreak of the civil war, and they played an important role in securing the town for parliament.<sup>56</sup> Basnet's son, Samuel, emerged as the leader of an independent congregation in the town during the war.<sup>57</sup> Richard Clarke, who had invited Samuel Clarke to preach in Coventry in 1628, was another leading Puritan in the corporation. Clarke continued to serve as an alderman until his death in 1640. Another prominent figure in the Puritan community was John Burgoyne, a member of the town gentry, who was presented to Bishop Wright as a nonconformist in 1636.<sup>58</sup>

There is, unfortunately, no evidence about the lectureship at St John's chapel during the 1630s, although it is likely to have continued throughout the decade. The latest reference to the lectureship in the corporation minute book is in 1631, when the position was held by Humphrey Fenn.<sup>59</sup> The lectureships at St Michael's and Holy Trinity were definitely maintained throughout the 1630s. On at least one occasion the lecture was preached by a known nonconformist. In 1638 Robert Woodford, the Puritan steward of Northampton, recorded in his diary that he had attended a lecture by "Mr Dyamond" in Coventry, adding that the lecturer had "preached very honestly & well".<sup>60</sup> Tristram Diamond was the vicar of Foleshill between 1618 and 1662. According to Calamy, he was ejected in 1662 because "his sentiments about ceremonies were puritannical".<sup>61</sup>

It is clear that nonconformity survived in Coventry during the 1630s. In 1635 Nathaniel Brent reported that a minority of the town's population were nonconformists.<sup>62</sup> A year later, John Burgoyne was presented to the episcopal visitation "for not standing at the creed".<sup>63</sup> It seems likely that the number of townspeople who refused to observe the ceremonies of the church was comparatively small, as it had been during the Jacobean period. According to Brent, the town was "wholly conformable, except some six or seven inferior, not considerable persons".<sup>64</sup> This figure was similar to Bishop Morton's estimate in 1621. Although Brent's report was probably over-optimistic, it is reasonable to assume that nonconformity was confined to a small but vociferous minority before 1640.

Throughout the 1630s, the influence of the Puritan faction in Coventry was balanced by a group of non-Puritan magistrates, who appear to have been broadly sympathetic to Laudian policies. Henry Million, who had been responsible for the expulsion of Samuel Clarke in 1628, was an alderman throughout the decade. John Clarke, who served with Million as a deputy lieutenant for the King in 1642, was also an alderman in this period. During his visit to Coventry in 1638, Robert Woodford was appalled to discover the "Arminian" sentiments of a section of the corporation. He wrote in his diary that he "had much dispute about predestinacon" with one of the aldermen during a meal at the council hall. Despite his spirited defence of the doctrine, he claimed that he "found few there that favoured it".<sup>65</sup>

The existence of a group of non-Puritan magistrates in Coventry was demonstrated by the relationship between the corporation and the town's beneficed clergy. In 1633 William Panting succeeded Samuel Buggs as vicar of St Michael's. Like his predecessor, Panting appears to have supported a ceremonial and anti-Puritan style of religion. His ministry was commended by Nathaniel Brent in 1635 as "very learned and discreet".<sup>66</sup> Until 1640, Panting appears to have enjoyed the support of a section of the corporation, and to have used this support to promote a sacramental style of worship. He retained his living until 1643, when he was sequestered by parliament.

One of Panting's first acts as minister of St Michael's was to adorn the communion table of his parish church with a "cloth of gold", which had previously been used "in hanging about the pulpit at extraordinarie times". This action would have been impossible without the co-operation of the mayor and aldermen, since the cloth belonged to the "treasury of the citie". In March 1634 the corporation offered to "freely and absolutely bestow" the artefact on the church, accepting that it would "make a fit and convenient clothe to cover the communion table".<sup>67</sup> This decision indicates that Panting enjoyed the support of a majority of the town's magistrates at the beginning of his ministry. It also suggests that there was a measure of support for a "Laudian" style of worship among the leading residents of the town.

The positive relationship between Panting and the corporation was confirmed in July 1636, when the mayor and aldermen agreed to increase his maintenance to £100 per annum. In return, Panting

consented to continue his ministry at St Michael's "in such reasonable manner as he hath heretofore used". The corporation also re-affirmed the minister's rights concerning the appointment of lecturers. Panting agreed "to give consent with the citie ... in election of the curate for preaching of the Wensdaies sermon in St Michael's church, he being a conformable man fit to be approved of by Mr Panting".<sup>68</sup> Clearly, this arrangement did not prevent nonconformist ministers, such as Tristram Diamond, from preaching elsewhere in the town. But it may have limited the availability of Puritan preaching during the 1630s.

To a large extent, the success of Panting's ministry during the 1630s was the result of his sensitive approach towards the implementation of Laudian policies. In 1637, when a dispute arose between Bishop Wright and the corporation over the removal of seats from the chancel of St Michael's church, he helped to negotiate a compromise between the two sides.<sup>69</sup> Later in the same year, he accepted a settlement between the bishop and the corporation concerning the position of the communion table, even though it involved considerable inconvenience.<sup>70</sup> By such means, Panting managed to soften the impact of the more provocative aspects of Laudianism, and to retain the support of the majority of the corporation.

It appears that Henry Carpenter, the vicar of Holy Trinity between 1633 and 1636, also enjoyed a successful ministry in Coventry. Like William Panting, Carpenter was committed to a "High Church" style of religion, and his ministry was notable for a series of decorations and improvements to his parish church. Following his institution in

1633, the churchwardens of Holy Trinity purchased "six pewter flaggons for the Comunion". In the same year, new mats were acquired to decorate the communion table, and the table itself was enclosed in a septum.<sup>71</sup> Carpenter's support for Laudian policies was underlined in 1635, when he was praised by Nathaniel Brent in his report of the metropolitan visitation.<sup>72</sup>

It is clear that Carpenter enjoyed the support of a significant section of his congregation. In 1636 he was preferred by the Lord Keeper to a more prosperous benefice outside the county. According to the parish vestry book, this decision led "some of the parishioners, on behalf of the rest", to send a petition to the Lord Keeper "for the said Mr Henry Carpenter [to] retorne and stae with them". In a further effort to prevent the minister's departure, the parish offered to increase his annual stipend by £10.<sup>73</sup> Again, this demonstrates the existence of a group within the town who were apparently prepared to accept the ecclesiastical policies of the Laudian period.

Carpenter was succeeded at Holy Trinity by Joseph Brown, who retained the living until 1638. Brown was clearly committed to the implementation of Laudian policies. It was during his incumbency, at the end of 1636, that the communion table in the parish church was moved to the east end of the chancel, and the ground of the chancel raised by three steps.<sup>74</sup> Subsequently, Brown was responsible for the elaborate decoration of the new altar-piece. Parish receipts, dated November 1636 and June 1637, recorded a series of payments to "com[mun]ilon table colourers".<sup>75</sup> There is no evidence on the

relationship between Brown and his parishioners. However, the reforms in the parish church appear to have been introduced without any serious protest, implying that they were at least tolerated by the majority of the congregation.

Brown's successor as vicar of Holy Trinity was Robert Proctor, who held the benefice until his death in 1643. It appears that Proctor continued the "High Church" policies of his predecessors. During his ministry, the church of Holy Trinity underwent further decorations and improvements. Between 1638 and 1639 the churchwardens made payments for extensive repairs to the church windows, and for the construction of a "great window" in the chancel. In 1639 the parish acquired a new surplice.<sup>76</sup> It is clear that Proctor enforced the conformity of his parishioners: in 1639 the churchwardens purchased "new matts for the comunicants to kneele on at the railles before the Comunion Table".<sup>77</sup> Little is known of Proctor's relationship with his congregation, but at least one visitor to Coventry was not impressed by his ministry: in October 1638 Robert Woodford recorded in his diary that Proctor was a "poore preacher".<sup>78</sup>

Clearly, the beneficed clergy of Coventry enjoyed a reasonably tranquil relationship with their parishioners during the 1630s, despite the activity of a minority of Puritans in the corporation. The same can be said of Bishop Wright, who was ultimately responsible for the implementation of Laudian policies in the town. Initially, Wright signalled his intention to deal severely with Coventry's Puritan community. In November 1632 he wrote approvingly to Samuel Buggs, remarking that "I hear very well of you and your

proceedings, unto which I shall ever be a close friend". The bishop expressed his concern about nonconformity in the town. He instructed Buggs to sent him a report on "the body of Coventry", describing "the partes affected [by nonconformists] and the affections of the partes, so I shall ... better effect, if need bee, the cure".<sup>79</sup>

It is reasonable to assume that Wright's first visitation in 1633 provoked the animosity of the Puritan faction in Coventry. As was shown in Chapter Two, the bishop's articles of visitation were more aggressively anti-Puritan than those of his predecessor. Moreover, Wright introduced the practice of bowing at the name of Jesus for the first time in 1633. It is possible that Humphrey Fenn was referring to this practice in the preface to his will in the following year. Fenn condemned "decrees for ceremonies" designed for "pomp or signification", and urged his followers to disobey them in defence of Christian freedom.<sup>80</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to assess the impact of Wright's policies in Coventry at the beginning of his episcopate, since the records of his first visitation have not survived.

However, it is clear that Wright's subsequent dealings with the town were based on pragmatism and compromise rather than confrontation. It appears that the bishop enjoyed a relatively good relationship with the corporation during the 1630s. For example, Wright supported the mayor and aldermen in their attempt to reduce Coventry's assessment for ship money in 1634. As an expression of their gratitude, the corporation presented the bishop with a silver cup valued at £20. This action was repeated in January 1636, when the



corporation presented "a guift of five pounds ... to the Lord Bishops wife in repect of his lordship's favour to this citie ... for the citie's assessment of the ship money".<sup>81</sup>

Bishop Wright proved to be equally accommodating in his implementation of Laudian reforms in Coventry. In 1636 the bishop's officials ordered the removal of seats blocking the approach to the chancel in St Michael's church. The corporation responded by consulting their lawyers "concerning the citie's right of the seats in the chancell of both parish churches".<sup>82</sup> However, this potentially damaging dispute was resolved by a compromise between the bishop and the corporation, with the support of William Panting. The meant that the seats would be removed only "twice a month, except upon extraordinary occasion". This settlement was recommended to Archbishop Laud by Charles Twysden, the chancellor of the diocese, in March 1637.<sup>83</sup>

The most remarkable example of Wright's flexibility in his dealings with Coventry concerned the positioning of the communion table in St Michael's church. In 1636 the chancellor of the diocese, acting on the bishop's instructions, ordered that the communion tables in St Michael's and Holy Trinity "should be removed up close to the east wall of the chancell", and "the chancells be handsomely rayed by three steps".<sup>84</sup> This reform was duly implemented in both parishes. However, in March 1637 Wright decreed that the communion table in St Michael's could be returned to the nave during the celebration of the eucharist.<sup>85</sup> Presumably, the bishop made this concession to placate the town corporation, whose members regarded St Michael's as the

town's most important church. This impression is confirmed by the fact that no similar arrangement was made in Holy Trinity, where the communion table remained in the east end of the chancel until 1641.<sup>86</sup>

Clearly, Wright's ruling on the communion table in St Michael's indicates that an important section of Coventry corporation was not prepared to support the more radical aspects of Laudian policy. Equally, the acceptance of the "altar" in Holy Trinity suggests a degree of flexibility on both sides. It is evident that Wright was prepared to act independently of the leadership of the church in order to prevent controversy. In 1637 Thomas Byrd protested to Archbishop Laud about the bishop's conduct.<sup>87</sup> Subsequently, according to Peter Heylyn, Laud reprimanded Wright for his policy on the communion table in St Michael's.<sup>88</sup> Despite this, however, Wright's order appears to have remained in force for the rest of the 1630s.<sup>89</sup>

Naturally, given the pragmatic flexibility of Bishop Wright, the main impact of Laudianism in Coventry was the result of national rather than diocesan initiatives. During the metropolitan visitation of 1635, Brent directed "that service and sermons shall begin at one time in both churches", in order to prevent people from attending more than one sermon in a day.<sup>90</sup> It appears that this order was imposed directly by Brent, without consultation with the bishop. Indeed, the direction was not included in Wright's articles of visitation in 1636 or 1639. In any case, it is clear that it was possible to hear more than one sermon in a day in Coventry in the late 1630s. Even William Prynne, who was held as a prisoner in the

town on 30 July 1637, was able to attend a morning service and sermon in Holy Trinity and an afternoon sermon in St Michael's.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Robert Woodford recorded in his diary on July 1st 1638 that he attended the lecture at Holy Trinity in the morning, then heard an afternoon sermon at Bagington.<sup>92</sup>

Another national initiative which affected Coventry was the decision of the Star Chamber in 1637 to prohibit "haberdashers & other tradesmen" from the sale of books. This order provoked a petition to Laud from the mercers of Coventry, who were established as suppliers of books in the town. The petitioners implored the Archbishop to allow them to continue their trade in "lawfull priviledged bookes, [such] as Bibles, testaments, psalters and psalm-books ... to his majestie's loyal subjects of Coventry & thereabouts". They emphasised that they did not "buy or sell any seditious, schismaticall or offensive books".<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, the outcome of this appeal is unknown. It is possible that the case was still underway when the Star Chamber was abolished in 1640.

Undoubtedly, the most dramatic example of the national authorities intervening directly in the affairs of Coventry occurred in 1637, when the Privy Council brought a *quo warranto* prosecution against the corporation for their reception of Henry Burton and William Prynne, the Puritan "martyrs", who had been transported through the town in July of that year. The proceedings began in August 1637. In November four of the town's aldermen, including Thomas Basnet, were called to London for examination. They were questioned on the following points:

"Whether they, or any of the other magistrates of the city, did ... give any countenance or unfitt respect, or applause, or guift, or entertainment to Burton & Prin ... & what they know of any other of the common people, or any of the aldermen's wives ... that misbehaved themselves in that kind." <sup>94</sup>

Following the examinations, the proceedings were respited to allow time for more witnesses to be called. The case apparently continued until 1640, when it was abandoned following the calling of the Long Parliament. The proceedings against Coventry were cited in the charges against Archbishop Laud in the following year.<sup>95</sup>

The only surviving deposition from the *quo warranto* proceedings is that of John Maynard, Prynne's gaoler at Coventry, who was examined in September 1637. Maynard's testimony confirms that the prisoner enjoyed a degree of support in the town, though this was apparently confined to a relatively small group. According to the gaoler, Prynne received a visit from "a minister whose name he knoweth not", with whom he spent a quarter of an hour. He was also visited by Alderman Richard Clarke, who "had noe private conference with him, nor stayed with him". Maynard added that he and his two assistants received gifts from the prisoner's well-wishers of "12d a peece", for which they were asked "to bee as kind unto the said Prinne as they might". He claimed that he could not identify the people responsible for this gesture.<sup>96</sup>

The whole episode of Burton and Prynne's transportation through Coventry exemplified the impact of national policies on the town. The initial prosecution and punishment of the men was determined by Archbishop Laud, and conducted in the High Commission. This action

clearly distressed a section of the population in Coventry, which expressed its support for the prisoners when they were confined in the town. Subsequently, the Privy Council compounded the original offence by prosecuting the corporation. It appears that the diocesan authorities played no part in any stage of this process. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that Bishop Wright would have handled the incident with far greater sensitivity, thereby avoiding any confrontation with the town.

However, despite the unwelcome intervention of the national authorities in the latter part of the decade, it seems that religious controversy in Coventry was generally restrained during the 1630s. The town's Puritan faction survived, but was balanced by an influential group of non-Puritans in the corporation. Bishop Wright succeeded in diluting the more provocative aspects of Laudian policy, which may otherwise have galvanised the town's "godly" community into a campaign of serious resistance. This peculiar situation held until the collapse of the King's government in 1640. Subsequently, the religious life of Coventry was transformed by the dramatic events which preceded the outbreak of the civil war.

### **3) The Outbreak of War, 1640-1642**

The two years between the assembly of the Long Parliament and the outbreak of the civil war were characterised by an atmosphere of unusual religious excitement in Warwickshire. The collapse of the

King's ecclesiastical policies, together with the opportunity presented by parliament to implement "godly" reform in the church, emboldened the Puritan community across the region. Inevitably, this new climate led to a revival of nonconformity in Coventry, and a backlash against the Laudian reforms of the preceding decade. In July 1641 the vestry of Holy Trinity voted to remove the communion table from its elevation in the east end of the chancel, and to level the chancel floor. This order, which was accepted by "the major part of the vestry", asserted that the "setting [of] the table alter-fasion, and raising the steps, was ... an Innovation and contrary to law".<sup>97</sup> Another vestry meeting, held in November 1641, ordered the removal of the organ from the church.<sup>98</sup>

The revival of Puritanism in 1641 was combined with a general atmosphere of anxiety, which was fuelled by rumours of Catholic plots. In December 1641 the corporation decreed that every householder in the town should provide himself with muskets and ammunition, "so that this citie maie have in readynes, upon any suddaine occasion, at least five hundred muskets for its defence and safeguard". Shortly afterwards, the town's night watch was doubled in response to the "present troubles and dangerous times". In March 1642 the mounting tension between the King and parliament provoked a further attempt to improve the town's defences. The corporation elected to send William Jesson to London "to speedily buy and provide for this citie fower peeces of ordnance", and to return with them "as soon as conveniently he maie".<sup>99</sup>

Until the summer of 1642, it appears that Coventry's Puritan faction had achieved a position of dominance. By the end of June, however, two distinct parties had emerged. These reflected the religious divisions in the corporation during the 1630s. According to the City Annals, Thomas Basnet and John Barker were elected deputy lieutenants for parliament, responsible for executing the Militia Ordinance; Henry Million and John Clarke became deputy lieutenants for the King. There followed a period of intense conflict, in which the two sides "gave ribbons to be worn in men's hatts" to distinguish their supporters, "so that the nearest neighbours were in great fear of each other".<sup>100</sup> This conflict continued until the middle of August, and was only resolved by the intervention of forces from outside the town.

The failure of either party to win the initiative in this period was recorded in a letter from John Barker to Lord Brooke on 25 June. Barker reported that many of the aldermen were opposed to the Militia Ordinance. The mayor, Christopher Davenport, had refused to implement it, though Barker believed that he could be persuaded of its merit.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, it seems that the Earl of Northampton failed to win over the town's magistrates. The City Annals imply that Million and Clarke attempted to secure the town's munitions for Northampton at the end of June, but were prevented by the rest of the corporation.<sup>102</sup> It appears that the active supporters of parliament and the King were in a minority, while the majority of the aldermen were reluctant to commit themselves to either side.

The precarious balance between the two parties in Coventry was still evident in July 1642. On 24 July the corporation decided by "a generall vote" that the mayor and sheriffs should attend the King at Leicester to explain their failure to execute the Commission of Array.<sup>103</sup> However, this decision was not carried out. According to the City Annals, "the mayor & sherives ... were taking horse on a Lords day morning to go, but some that favoured the parliament compelled them to stay at home".<sup>104</sup> It seems that the mayor was detained by a Puritan mob, whose opposition to the King was probably inflamed by their anger at the violation of the Sabbath. If this was the case, it would appear that popular pressure, inspired by religious radicalism, was tipping the balance in favour of parliament by the beginning of August.

The events of August 1642 were decisive in determining the allegiance of Coventry in the civil war. While the Puritan faction had seized the initiative at the beginning of the month, it was only through outside intervention that the town was finally secured for parliament. The town's size and strategic position ensured that it was a target for both the royalist and parliamentary armies. At the beginning of August the King announced his intention to bring his forces to the town. The corporation, which was still dominated by moderates, was clearly prepared to receive him: on 17 August they elected to borrow £400 to provide entertainment for the royal party.<sup>105</sup> Two days later, however, these plans were destroyed by an influx of parliamentarians into the town. According to the City Annals, "there came into this city about 400 of the parliament party



from Bermingham & besides many from other parts, so that they prevailed & kept this city".<sup>106</sup>

The decisive role of the outsiders in Coventry is confirmed by a Royal Warrant issued on 20 August. This asserted that "divers persons ill-affected to his majesty's government, and strangers to his cittie of Coventry, are lately gotten into that cittie". These invaders had allied themselves with "others of that place ... to keepe the said cittie by force of armes against his majesty". The warrant offered to pardon the "strangers" if they agreed to "depart peacably".<sup>107</sup> The situation in Coventry itself was described by John Whitwick, the town's sergeant, in a letter to the mayor and aldermen on the same day. Whitwick implored the corporation to make peace with the King, while expressing his fear that this decision was now beyond its control. He wrote that "you have for the present suffered the government of the cittie to bee transferred into other hands", and urged that "it be reduced presently into your owne power".<sup>108</sup>

It appears that the majority of the "strangers" who flooded into Coventry in August 1642 were Puritans from neighbouring towns. Writing at the beginning of September, Sir William Dugdale remarked that the town was won for parliament "through the aid of many sectaries and schismatics which flocked unto them with arms and ammunition, especially from the populous town of Birmingham".<sup>109</sup> At the end of the year, Richard Baxter found that the town was populated by "the most religious men of the parts round about, especially from Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield, Tanworth, Nuneaton, Hinkley and

Rugby".<sup>110</sup> Unsurprisingly, many of these towns had been centres of Puritan activity during the 1630s.<sup>111</sup>

It seems that "godly" clergy, as well as layfolk, converged on Coventry in the summer of 1642. At least one nonconformist minister, Simon Moore of Frankton, arrived in the town before the King was turned away on 20 August.<sup>112</sup> Others from neighbouring parishes, such as Tristram Diamond and Anthony Burges, probably came to the town in the same period. The town's beneficed clergy were unable to resist the newcomers. William Panting remained in his parish until he was sequestered in March 1643; Robert Proctor died in the same year, and was replaced by John Bryan. According to Richard Baxter, there were "about thirty worthy ministers" in Coventry by the end of 1642.<sup>113</sup>

The victory of the parliamentarians was sealed when Lord Brooke's forces entered Coventry on 24 August 1642. The King's forces retreated, and the town was converted into a parliamentary garrison. The arrival of Brooke's men heightened the atmosphere of religious enthusiasm which had gripped the town throughout August. Even before they reached Coventry, the soldiers pillaged the house of Francis Holyoake, the High Church minister of Southam.<sup>114</sup> By the end of the month, their zeal was such that it was beginning to pose a threat to discipline. According to Nehemiah Wharton, a soldier in the army, Brooke was compelled to impose martial law to prevent his men from plundering the houses of "malignants" in the town.<sup>115</sup>

The letters of Nehemiah Wharton testify to the extraordinary, highly emotional atmosphere of "godly" upheaval in Coventry at the end of August 1642. The soldiers in Brooke's army set about the religious and moral reformation of the town. On 27 August they captured the negligent minister of Sowe, George Dale, and "led him ridiculously about the city". On the following day, a prostitute who had followed Brooke's army from London "was taken by the soldiers and first led about the city, then set in the pillory, after which the cage, then duckt in a river, and at the last banished [from] the city".<sup>116</sup> Presumably, Brooke's men were encouraged in these displays of piety by the Puritan faction within Coventry, which had established its dominance in the preceding weeks. There is no indication in Wharton's letters of any resistance in the town.

By September 1642 the government of Coventry was effectively in the hands of John Barker, the deputy lieutenant for parliament. In the following month, the corporation agreed to deliver to Barker "two hundred pounds in money and fifty pounds in powder, match and bulletts", to be employed for "guarding & defending this citie".<sup>117</sup> Coventry remained a parliamentary stronghold, and a centre of radical Puritanism, throughout the 1640s. Clarendon later asserted that its people "were alienated from any reverence to the government".<sup>118</sup> However, it is clear that Coventry's emergence as a centre of radicalism owed much to outside forces. The town's Puritan faction did not achieve a position of unchallenged authority until August 1642, and probably never won the hearts of the majority of the corporation. Ultimately, it was the intervention of outsiders

that secured Coventry for the cause of "godly religion" at the outbreak of the civil war.

## Chapter Eight: Religion in Stratford-upon-Avon, 1603-1642

"Thomas Wilson ... seemed to me ... to govern the people and Towne of Stratford, and to order all things in the Church, according to his own will, as if he had been another Calvin or Beza in Geneva."

John Thornborough, Bishop of Worcester, 1636 <sup>1</sup>

By the first half of the seventeenth century, Stratford-upon-Avon was established as one of the largest and most prosperous towns in Warwickshire. It served as an important market place for the southern part of the county, and its annual horse fair attracted traders from many areas of the Midlands. As well as its role as a trading centre, the town supported its own successful industries, particularly malting and glove-making. In common with Coventry and Warwick, Stratford was governed by a corporation, composed of members of the urban gentry and successful traders and manufacturers. This consisted of fourteen burgesses and fourteen aldermen, who annually elected a chief magistrate or "bailiff". The corporation was fiercely jealous of its independence and privileges, and exercised considerable influence over the religious and political life of the community.

The religious situation in early Stuart Stratford was remarkably complex and volatile. Ecclesiastical authority was divided between the Bishop of Worcester, the corporation and the parish minister.

The first section of this chapter sets out the relationship between these parties, and examines the contentions which frequently divided them. It also discusses the status of Stratford as a "peculiar" parish, and assesses the role of its "peculiar" court. The second section describes the events in Stratford between 1619 and 1625, when the town was convulsed by a violent struggle between two factions over the appointment of a new minister. It argues that political factors were partly responsible for these events. However, the confrontation was also inspired by the existence of committed Puritan and anti-Puritan elements in the town.

The third section describes religious life in Stratford from 1625 to 1640. It argues that this period witnessed the triumph of the Puritan faction in the town, despite the ecclesiastical policies promoted by Charles I. The ascendancy of "godly religion" was epitomised by the ministry of Thomas Wilson, the nonconformist vicar of Holy Trinity. Wilson's career provides a well-documented example of the way in which a determined Puritan churchman could stamp his authority on a parish. It also illustrates the limits of episcopal efforts to restrict the influence of Puritanism in the 1630s. The final section of the chapter looks briefly at the response of Stratford to the events leading to the outbreak of the civil war, and assesses the role of religion in this period.

## 1) Religious Authority in Stratford

The parish church of Holy Trinity played a fundamental role in the social as well as the religious life of Stratford. To the town's civic leaders, church services presented an opportunity to display their authority. Accordingly, the bailiff, burgesses and aldermen were careful to present themselves at church in a way which reflected the dignity of their office. In 1612 the corporation ruled that each of its members should wear his ceremonial gown in the church. This show of authority was elaborated in 1641, when the company adopted the practice of walking in procession from the Guild Hall to attend services at Holy Trinity on Sunday mornings and evenings.<sup>2</sup>

Attendance at services also provided an opportunity for the members of the corporation to assert their own personal status. It was customary for the bailiff, burgesses and aldermen to be allocated seats in the church according to their rank. The importance of this convention was emphasised in 1634, when locks were fitted to the pews of the three senior burgesses to prevent men of lesser rank from usurping their places. Despite measures of this kind, disputes about the distribution of seats arose in the 1630s. Nathaniel Brent observed that there were "many contentions about seats in the church" during his visitation in 1635.<sup>3</sup> In the same period, the minute book of the corporation recorded that members could be fined by their fellows for refusing to give precedence in the church to more senior men.<sup>4</sup>

The burgesses and aldermen were also eager to exert influence over the church's affairs. Their authority was limited, as the patronage of Holy Trinity was held by the crown. The corporation's role in the appointment of ministers was confined to petitioning on behalf of its preferred candidate, a process which produced mixed results in the early Stuart period. In 1619 the corporation achieved a notable success in obtaining a grant from the Lord Chancellor for the removal of John Rogers, the incumbent minister, "for holding diverse benefices together at one tyme".<sup>5</sup> Rogers was replaced by Thomas Wilson of Evesham, a Puritan divine much favoured by the town's magistrates. After Wilson's death in 1638, the corporation employed "all the best means" to ensure his replacement by Robert Harris of Hanwell in Oxfordshire. On this occasion, however, its efforts ended in failure when the King imposed his own candidate, Henry Twitchett, in 1640.<sup>6</sup>

The civic leaders of Stratford were able to influence the church in many other ways. Members of the corporation involved themselves closely in the administration of the parish. The majority of churchwardens chosen between 1603 and 1642 were burgesses or aldermen. By 1630 no fewer than 17 members of the corporation had served as churchwardens, while others had held the office of sidesman. It was common for members of the company to be re-elected regularly as parish officers. For example, William Smith, a successful haberdasher who served as a burgess throughout the early Stuart period, was chosen as a churchwarden in 1619, 1620, 1622 and 1625, and acted as a sidesman in the following year.<sup>7</sup>



The corporation also controlled the appointment of "assistant ministers", or curates, at Holy Trinity. The first "assistant", Edward Wilmore, was elected by the burgesses and aldermen in 1612, with the provision that his employment would continue only as long as he was "well liked" by his patrons. Another five assistants were appointed and dismissed on this basis between 1614 and 1620. In 1624 the position was offered to Simon Trapp, who retained it with the corporation's favour for twenty years.<sup>9</sup> Inevitably, the dependence of the assistant ministers on the corporation meant that they developed close ties with its members. This was illustrated in 1614, when Edward Wilmore himself resigned his position as assistant minister to become an alderman.<sup>9</sup>

Another way in which the corporation exercised authority in the church was by the appointment of lecturers, who preached weekly sermons in the town. Like the "assistant ministers", they depended for their position on the good will of the burgesses and aldermen. It is probable that Thomas Wilson was employed in this capacity before his appointment as vicar in 1619. A certain Richard Walker, "an honest, lerned & godlie preacher", also seems to have served as a lecturer in the early 1620s.<sup>10</sup> In 1629 a lectureship was offered to Robert Harris of Hanwell in Oxfordshire, who held the position for two years.<sup>11</sup> It subsequently passed to another Oxfordshire minister, the celebrated Puritan preacher, William Whately of Banbury, who remained active in the parish until 1637.<sup>12</sup>

Predictably, the corporation's attempts to influence affairs in the parish church led to frequent disputes with the ministers. The

appointment of "assistant ministers" was one source of friction. In 1617 the corporation rejected the efforts of the vicar, John Rogers, to install the curate of Luddington as his assistant, and imposed its own candidate instead.<sup>13</sup> There were also occasional disputes over the appointment of churchwardens and sidesmen. In 1633, for example, the corporation found technical grounds to reject the election of the physician John Hall as a churchwarden, though he was the friend and preferred candidate of Thomas Wilson.<sup>14</sup>

The corporation was also frequently at odds with the ministers of Holy Trinity over financial matters. The incumbency of John Rogers was dominated by quarrels with the burgesses and aldermen over the income from church property. The revenue from the churchyard was contested with particular acrimony. After a protracted disagreement, Rogers accepted a ruling in favour of the corporation by Fulke Greville, the town's Recorder, in 1613. Shortly afterwards, a second dispute arose over the income from burials in the chancel. This came to a head in 1618, when the corporation formally relieved Rogers of the profits from the chancel, and declared that all future payments for burials should go directly to the town chamberlain.<sup>15</sup> These disputes contributed to the corporation's decision to remove Rogers from his benefice in 1619.

Ironically, Rogers' replacement, Thomas Wilson, proved a more formidable defender of the church's financial rights. Initially, Wilson enjoyed a cordial relationship with the corporation: he even secured the right to receive half the revenues of the churchyard in 1621. However, this relationship deteriorated after 1627, following a

renewed dispute about the churchyard, and an attempt by the corporation to reduce the minister's maintenance. For most of the following decade, Wilson campaigned for redress through the courts. Despite several truces between the two sides, the dispute was still unresolved at the time of his death in 1638.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, conflict between the corporation and the ministers of Holy Trinity was a recurrent theme in early Stuart Stratford.

Another important factor in the town's religious life was its status as a "peculiar" parish. This meant that it enjoyed a degree of independence from the diocese of Worcester. The most important expression of this independence was the minister's right to convene his own court, empowered to enforce canon law within the parish boundaries. This court had authority in all matters which would normally be handled by the archdeacon of Worcester, including religious and moral offences. Its jurisdiction encompassed Stratford and a number of villages in the surrounding area. These included hamlets with their own chapels, such as Bishopton and Luddington, whose curates were directly responsible to the minister of Stratford.

Naturally, the right to convene the peculiar court enhanced the position of the incumbent of Holy Trinity. The minister was empowered to initiate his own "visitations" in the parish: he received churchwarden's presentments, decided which cases to prosecute, and acted as judge in the subsequent hearings. He was authorised to pass sentences of penance and excommunication. It appears that the ministers of Stratford were prepared to exercise these powers throughout the early Stuart period. Act books of the peculiar court

have survived from the periods 1590-1608 and 1622-1624, together with some pages from 1633.<sup>17</sup> Presentments and correspondence to the court have been preserved from 1614 to 1633.<sup>18</sup>

The peculiar court was also important to the town corporation. It enhanced the moral authority of the bailiff and senior burgesses, who were occasionally called to hear the penances of offenders, and were asked to certify that penances had been performed.<sup>19</sup> The court also provided a forum for the settlement of local disputes, avoiding the intervention of the diocesan authorities. In this way it symbolised the independence of the town, and increased the chances of the interested parties successfully influencing the outcome. In 1633, for example, the court was able to adjudicate in a dispute over church seating between two members of the corporation.<sup>20</sup>

For these reasons, both the ministers of Stratford and the corporation were eager to uphold and extend the independence of the peculiar court. In theory, the rights of the court were suspended in years when the Bishop of Worcester conducted his own visitations; in practice, both John Rogers and Thomas Wilson seem to have ignored this provision. The surviving presentments and Act Books of the peculiar court suggest that it continued to sit without regard for episcopal visitations. Predictably, this practice led to disputes over authority between the ministers of Stratford and the diocesan court. In 1621 Wilson was reprimanded by the archdeacon of Worcester for prosecuting a couple for fornication when their case was already in the hands of the bishop. Wilson received similar complaints from Worcester throughout the 1620s.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, the corporation sought to protect the peculiar court from episcopal interference. In 1625 it reaffirmed the right of Thomas Wilson to conduct his own visitations, and to act as an ecclesiastical judge. Later that year the company censured one of its own members, Christopher Smith, for undermining the authority of the peculiar court:

"Christopher Smith hath much wronged this Company & disgraced them, not only by his heynous offence in Comitting Adultery, but alsoe in that he hath Refused to be Confirmed by the Judge of our peculier Jurisdiccon, appealing [instead] to the Court of Worcester & thereby weakening our lyberty." <sup>22</sup>

As a result of these "wrongs", the corporation voted to remove Smith from his position as a principal burgess, thereby asserting the primacy of the peculiar court in dealing with moral offences in the town.

Clearly, the actions of the ministers of Holy Trinity and the town corporation ensured that Stratford enjoyed a considerable degree of ecclesiastical autonomy. However, the parish was not completely independent from outside influence. The bishops of Worcester maintained their right to oversee it in their triennial visitations, and to hear cases arising from these visitations in the consistory court. It was also necessary for the parish to obtain episcopal permission before alterations could be made in the church. In 1633, for example, a new seat was erected in Holy Trinity following an "order from the Lord Bishopp of Worch[ester] on his Triannuall visitacon".<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the corporation had to obtain an order from Bishop Thornborough before they could erect a new row of pews for the bailiff and senior burgesses in 1636.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, although the ministers of Holy Trinity exercised their own jurisdiction, they themselves were not immune from prosecution in the higher courts. The Puritan Richard Byfield, who held the living between 1596 and 1605, was frequently presented to Worcester consistory court.<sup>25</sup> Thomas Wilson, another nonconformist, was prosecuted there in the early 1620s, and again in the High Commission following the metropolitan visitation in 1635.<sup>26</sup> However, the effectiveness of these proceedings was limited. Wilson survived his first prosecution through the intervention of Fulke Greville, who petitioned Bishop Thornborough on his behalf in 1625.<sup>27</sup> Equally, the case against him in the High Commission proved to be laborious and time-consuming, and he remained at Holy Trinity until his death in 1638. The proceedings against Wilson are examined in section three.

Although Stratford's status as a peculiar parish did not give it complete ecclesiastical independence, the peculiar court enjoyed considerable influence in the town. The court was at least as effective at enforcing religious and moral discipline as its diocesan equivalents. In general, the presentments received by the ministers of Holy Trinity were more detailed than those sent to Worcester during episcopal visitations. The quantity of information was also greater. It was common for the minister to conduct more than one visitation in a year: in 1619, for example, Thomas Wilson was sent three reports from the town of Stratford, two from Luddington and one from Bishopton.<sup>28</sup> The ministers also benefited from the limited size of their jurisdiction, which made it possible for them to supervise personally the implementation of sentences.

The effectiveness of the peculiar court is indicated by the surviving act books. These show that the majority of the population respected the court's authority, and were prepared to attend its hearings when they were cited to do so. In May 1622, for example, the court dealt with a total of 32 cases, including sexual offences, Sabbath-breaking and absence from church. A total of 21 people presented themselves for judgment, and were either pardoned, fined or ordered to perform penances. Only 11 people ignored their citations; and the majority of these appeared at later sessions.<sup>29</sup> These figures compare reasonably well with recent estimates of attendance in the higher ecclesiastical courts. Martin Ingram has calculated that around 75% of defendants responded to citations to the episcopal courts in the early Stuart period.<sup>30</sup>

The peculiar court at Stratford was also fairly effective at enforcing the financial rights of the parish church. This was illustrated in 1618, when a levy was raised to improve the "ruinouse" condition of the chancel. In December 1618 a total of 28 people were presented from Stratford and its environs for refusing to pay.<sup>31</sup> By the end of the month, over a third of those presented had discharged their debt, thereby avoiding a citation to the minister's court.<sup>32</sup> Only five people were reported for debts to the church in the following decade, suggesting that most of the outstanding levies had been paid.<sup>33</sup>

However, despite its general effectiveness, the peculiar court suffered from the weaknesses which affected all ecclesiastical tribunals in early modern England. It depended ultimately on the

diligence of the churchwardens, whose responsibilities were difficult and time-consuming. Even in a small jurisdiction such as Stratford the wardens were only able to present a comparatively small number of offenders, and were unable to cope with widespread abuses such as absence from church. The information available to them was frequently vague, particularly when it related to the numerous hamlets outside the town. In 1621, for example, the wardens presented "all the inhabytants of Bushwood" for absence from church, although "their names to us are unknown".<sup>34</sup>

Alongside these familiar problems, the peculiar court suffered from difficulties arising from the unusual circumstances of its jurisdiction. Stratford's role as a market town meant that its population was relatively mobile, and the small size of the minister's jurisdiction made it fairly easy for offenders to escape into other areas. This problem was illustrated in 1625, when a man was presented for conveying a woman under sentence out of the parish. As a result, the churchwarden reported that she "hath not received punishment for her offence".<sup>35</sup> Different problems arose when offenders disputed the authority of the minister's visitations, and appealed for their cases to be heard in the diocesan court. In 1627, for example, a certain William Bartlett denounced the churchwardens of Stratford as dishonest, and resolved to travel to Worcester to clear himself of the charge of fathering an illegitimate child.<sup>36</sup>



## 2) Religious Conflict in Stratford, 1619-1625

In common with Coventry and Warwick, Stratford was firmly established as a centre of "godly religion" by the first half of the seventeenth century. Puritans enjoyed positions of authority in the corporation throughout the period, and their attempts to impose the principles of "godliness" were a dominant factor in the town's religious life. The influence of the Puritan community was increased by the town's effective independence from the Bishop of Worcester. However, Stratford's Puritans did not enjoy a position of unchallenged authority. This fact was demonstrated by the dramatic events of the early 1620s, when the actions of the burgesses and aldermen provoked a campaign to unseat them by a group of vehement anti-Puritans.

In 1619 the magistrates of Stratford obtained a warrant from the Lord Chancellor to remove John Rogers from the benefice of Holy Trinity, on the grounds that he was neglecting his cure and unlawfully holding other livings. Rogers was replaced by Thomas Wilson, a "lerner preacher" from Evesham with markedly Puritan opinions. The dismissal of Rogers provoked the indignation of a group of townspeople, who formed a "confederation" to agitate for his reinstatement. The activity of the "confederates", and the efforts of Wilson's supporters to suppress them, culminated in 1621, when the corporation sent a bill of complaint to the Star Chamber.<sup>37</sup> This bill, together with documents from the peculiar court, makes it possible to examine the intense and often violent struggle between the two sides in considerable detail.

The confederates' campaign involved a series of attacks, both physical and verbal, on the new minister and his supporters. The most dramatic of these took place on the day before Wilson's induction in May 1619, when he attended a service at Holy Trinity. A mob assembled outside the church, armed with "diverse unlawfull weapons", and threatened to "pull, dragg and hale him out of the church". The new vicar was bundled into the chancel by his friends, who feared that otherwise "he would never have come forth alive".<sup>38</sup> In the months that followed, Wilson was the target of several less serious attacks. In July 1619 a group of confederates were presented to the peculiar court for "committinge a riot in the church", and in October a woman was reported for abusing the minister by "gyving him the tytle of a Knave".<sup>39</sup> As well as these violent outbursts, the confederates circulated a series of libels against Wilson and the corporation between 1619 and 1621. These depicted them as "Puritans", motivated by a mixture of religious zealotry, self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

Keith Wrightson and other historians have argued that the professors of "godly religion" were drawn mainly from the more affluent section of society, which sought to impose religious discipline on the unruly lower orders.<sup>40</sup> The conflict between the corporation and the "confederates" did not conform to this pattern. It is difficult to identify any social or economic division between the two sides: each was led by members of the wealthier part of the community, though it is possible that the confederates enjoyed wider support among the poor. The conflict was based on a combination of religious

grievances, political ambitions and personal animosities, and cannot be explained in terms of any single factor.

It seems that Wilson enjoyed the support of the majority of the corporation, including its senior members. These included two J.P.s, John Wolmer and Henry Smith, who were named in the confederates' libels as instigators of the plot to oust the former vicar. Wilson also appealed to a cross-section of the town's professional and mercantile classes: his defenders included the lawyer, Thomas Lucas, the mercer, Daniel Baker, and the haberdasher, William Smith. There is also some evidence of support for the new minister outside the corporation, though this is more limited. The shoemaker, John Jordan, was lampooned by the confederates as a "Cobbler turned devine"; and John Gunne, a local farmer, was derided as a "Puritan".<sup>41</sup>

On the other side, there is evidence of a broad coalition of opposition to the new minister. The leaders of the confederates included five members of the town gentry, including two former aldermen, Thomas Rutter and John Nashe.<sup>42</sup> Four yeomen were also involved in the agitation. One of them, John Pinke, was probably responsible for the confederates' libels.<sup>43</sup> The confederates also enjoyed the support of several local traders and artisans: these included the maltster, William Smith, the weaver, Thomas Mills, and the blacksmith, Thomas Courte. It is also clear that they were able to mobilise popular hostility to Wilson on a fairly large scale. The attack on the church in May 1619, and a subsequent "riot" provoked by the corporation's attempt to take down a Maypole, involved "diverse

ryotous and ill disposed persons", presumably drawn from the poorer ranks of the urban community.<sup>44</sup>

It seems that the struggle between the corporation and the confederates was based on secular as well as religious issues. There can be little doubt that political and personal factors contributed to the corporation's initial decision to remove John Rogers from his benefice. As was shown in section one, disputes over the revenues from the churchyard and chancel had soured relations between the town's magistrates and the minister in the preceding decade. These quarrels were probably exacerbated by the fact that Rogers was constantly in debt to the corporation: he still owed its members five pounds at the time of his ejection in 1619.<sup>45</sup>

The political reasons for the corporation's actions should not obscure the fact that the men behind Rogers' removal were also motivated by "godly religion". The surviving evidence suggests that the ousted minister was a moderate, conformable churchman <sup>46</sup>, while his replacement was a convinced nonconformist. Wilson was repeatedly reported for nonconformity in the course of his ministry, culminating in his trial in the High Commission in 1636.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the Puritanism of his supporters was repeatedly mentioned in the libels against them. These mocked them as "Puritans", a "puer faction", and the "true religious".<sup>48</sup> These allegations were confirmed by the corporation's policies in the following decade. Despite their financial dispute with Wilson, they continued to patronise "painful" ministers in the 1630s, notably Robert Harris and William Whateley of Banbury.<sup>49</sup>

The "confederates" were also motivated by a mixture of secular and religious considerations. At least one of their leaders, Thomas Rutter, had a history of personal animosity towards the corporation. Rutter served as a burgess until 1612, when he was removed from office as a result of a financial dispute. In 1615 he was reinstated in the position of town chamberlain, but his relationship with the rest of the corporation remained difficult. In 1618 he was reprimanded and fined for "uncivil and unreverent" comments about the Bailiff, John Wilmore.<sup>50</sup> It is reasonable to assume that his support for the confederates in the following year was motivated by his long-standing differences with the leaders of the corporation.

It seems that the secular motives of men such as Thomas Rutter were shared by other members of the "confederation". As well as mocking the religious views of Wilson's supporters, the confederates' libels often included allegations relating to personal matters. One scurrilous piece, entitled "To the Magistrates", claimed that the lawyer, Thomas Lucas, was the son of a collier. This suggestion was rebutted in the corporation's bill to the Star Chamber, which asserted that "in truth his father was a gentleman".<sup>51</sup> The same piece alleged that John Gunn, another of Wilson's supporters, was a cuckold. This particular accusation led to a case of defamation in the peculiar court in 1619.<sup>52</sup> Allegations of this kind suggest that personal animosities, which were probably established before the arrival of Thomas Wilson, played a part in the conflict between the two sides.

However, it is clear that the secular motives of the confederates were entangled with their opposition to the religious policies of the corporation. On one level, it seems that the confederates were genuinely affronted by the removal of John Rogers, a popular minister, and his replacement by an outsider. The libels against Wilson's supporters referred to the "malicious" and illegal ejection of Rogers, and described the ousted minister as "our best friend".<sup>53</sup> On another level, the attacks on Wilson and his supporters were based on anti-Puritan sentiments. Above all, these sentiments reflected the widespread view that Puritans were "over-strict" in their imposition of moral regulations, and the fear that the new vicar would impose a harsh regime of "godliness" in the town.

The confederates' fear of a "moral tyranny" was probably encouraged by the actions of the town's magistrates in the preceding decade. In 1612 the corporation had introduced an act to reduce the number of taverns in the town, which had been followed by a prohibition on all "tippling" in the afternoons.<sup>54</sup> The arrival of a Puritan minister, with control of the peculiar court, suggested that these and similar measures would be enforced strictly in the future. The confederates' distaste for Puritan morality was mentioned in the bill against them in 1621: this alleged that they opposed Wilson because they feared that he would use his authority to suppress "their great vices and disorders".<sup>55</sup> It seems that these fears were well-founded. At least seven of the confederates were presented to the peculiar court between 1619 and 1622, on charges including Sabbath-breaking and absence from church.<sup>56</sup>

The most dramatic illustration of the confederates' opposition to Puritan "over-strictness" came in a clash with the corporation over the erection of a Maypole. In September 1620, at the time of the annual horse fair, the confederates set up a Maypole in the vicinity of the parish church. The corporation objected to the pole, claiming that it obstructed the passage-way to the church, and caused it to be taken down. In response to this, a mob assembled "neer unto the place where the Maypole was first sett up, and there ... by ryotous force [lifted] the pole halfe waye up again". The outcome of this episode is unclear. However, it appears that Wilson's supporters were unable to impose their will, and the Maypole remained in place for the duration of the fair.<sup>57</sup>

In their presentation of this incident to the Star Chamber, the corporation members were careful to stress that their actions were not motivated by religious objections to the Maypole. They asserted that they had removed it because it was an inconvenience, "not for any dislike they had unto the pole".<sup>58</sup> However, in the context of the wider struggle against the confederates, it is clear that the corporation's behaviour was interpreted as an example of Puritan "meddling". Equally, it is likely that the pole's removal was inspired in part by "godly religion". Puritans throughout the region were redoubling their efforts to suppress "superstitious" games in this period, apparently as a reaction to the Book of Sports in 1618. Samuel Burton condemned the suppression of May-Games by "over-zealous" ministers in a sermon at Warwick in 1619.<sup>59</sup> Another riot provoked by an attempt to take down a Maypole was reported from Brinklow in 1621.<sup>60</sup>

While the main thrust of the attack on the Puritans in Stratford was directed at their "over-strictness", the confederates objected to other aspects of "godly religion" as well. Their libels referred derisively to the works of William Perkins, the Puritan divine, which were apparently favoured by Wilson's supporters in the corporation.<sup>61</sup> It also appears that the confederates objected to Wilson's nonconformity. According to the company's bill of complaint in 1621, the leaders of the campaign against the new vicar asserted that he "would not obeye ecclesiasticall lawes, Canons and constitucons". Unsurprisingly, this allegation was vigorously denied in the bill, which asserted unconvincingly that Wilson had always been "most conformable".<sup>62</sup>

Clearly, a number of factors were combined in the confederates' campaign against Wilson and his supporters. This mixture of motives was illustrated in one of their libels, a satirical letter addressed "To any honest Puritan", which began as follows:

"All the old bitinge and young suckinge Puritans of Stratford are joined ... maliciously to displace and utterly undoe their minister, and to bring in his place as arrant a knave as themselves, of purpose to assist them in their hypocrisye ... "

The account of the ill-treatment of Rogers was followed by the assertion that the town's magistrates were "long-nosed knaves", determined to busy themselves in other people's affairs. After this, the letter referred mockingly to the works of William Perkins. The piece concluded with a list of the town's "Puritan" trouble-makers, crudely insulting their physical appearance and mannerisms.<sup>63</sup>



Inevitably, the struggle between the confederates and Wilson's supporters raised the question of the relationship between Stratford and the diocesan authorities. The confederates, fearful that the new minister would enjoy excessive power in the parish, were obliged to resort to the bishop's courts. Their position was strengthened by the fact that one of their number, William Nixon, served as the apparitor to the consistory court. According to the corporation, Nixon exploited his position to favour the confederates and counter Wilson's authority. He unlawfully discharged two men presented to Bishop Thornborough for Sabbath-breaking in 1621. On another occasion, he allegedly threatened to cite certain of Wilson's supporters to the consistory court, without any warrant from his superiors. The apparitor was also accused of delivering false citations, and even sentences of penance, to Wilson's supporters.<sup>54</sup>

The confederates also employed the diocesan court in a more conventional way in their campaign to remove Thomas Wilson. In 1621 they complained to the bishop about the behaviour of the new minister. Unfortunately, the original report has been lost, but surviving documents from the corporation suggest that Wilson was accused of refusing to wear the surplice, administering the communion to people seated, performing marriages without the ring, and conducting baptisms without making the sign of the cross.<sup>55</sup> These accusations resulted in the minister's prosecution in the consistory court, which continued until 1625.<sup>56</sup>

Wilson's supporters were resolute in their response to this challenge. In 1622 the corporation petitioned Bishop Thornborough on the

minister's behalf, rejecting the charges against him and asserting that he acted "in all conformytie to the discipline of the Church of England". They also reiterated Wilson's right to exercise a peculiar jurisdiction in the parish.<sup>67</sup> The burgesses sent a second certificate to the consistory court in 1625.<sup>68</sup> In the same year, they solicited outside support for the minister. They appealed to the Earl of Middlesex (who held a residence at Milcote, south of Stratford) to act on Wilson's behalf, and persuaded Lord Brooke to take up his case in a letter to Thornborough.<sup>69</sup> It appears that these measures were successful: there are no records of further proceedings against Wilson until the metropolitan visitation in 1635.

Ultimately, the attempt by the confederates to reduce the influence of Puritanism in Stratford was a failure. Thomas Wilson survived the onslaught against him, and retained his living at Holy Trinity until his death in 1638, despite opposition from the ecclesiastical authorities and his former allies in the corporation. The men who imposed Wilson on the parish remained in power, and continued to dominate the religious life of the town. The five burgesses and aldermen named in the confederates' libels in the early 1620s were still members of the corporation in 1630. Four of them, Henry Smith, John Wilmore, Daniel Baker and Richard Castle, continued to hold senior positions in the corporation throughout the 1630s.<sup>70</sup>

While Wilson and his supporters continued to dominate Stratford in the period following their conflict with the confederates, the confederates themselves appear to have lost much of their influence in the town. The only serious challenge to Wilson's position after

1625 came from his erstwhile defenders on the corporation, who pursued a bitter financial dispute with him in the 1630s. There is nothing to suggest that this reflected a change of religious policy on the part of the town's magistrates, or a resurgence of support for the minister's enemies. Indeed, none of the known confederates were elected to the corporation in the period following the disturbances in the early 1620s. The years from 1625 to 1640 were characterised by the ascendancy of "godly religion" in Stratford, which is described in the following section.

### 3) Religion in Stratford, 1625-1640

The arrival of Thomas Wilson in 1619 had marked a turning-point in the religious life of Stratford. The new vicar introduced a "painful" ministry in the town, and deviated from the ecclesiastical conformity of his predecessor. It seems that John Rogers had adhered to the canons of the established church: the records of the consistory court at Worcester show that he was never presented for nonconformity, and indicate that on one occasion he refused to perform an uncanonical service of marriage.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, Thomas Wilson was suspected of nonconformity throughout his career. He was first reported to Bishop Thornborough in 1621, and the charges against him were revived in the mid-1630s, leading to his prosecution in the Court of High Commission.<sup>72</sup>

More generally, Wilson imposed his religious opinions in the parish through his authority as judge of the peculiar jurisdiction. Throughout the Stuart period, the cases heard in the peculiar court tended to reflect the views of the ministers of Holy Trinity, who were able to call their own visitations, and could emphasise the offences which concerned them most. Under Wilson, the connection between the minister and the court was particularly close: indeed, the court occasionally convened in the vicarage in the 1620s.<sup>73</sup> The surviving presentments and Act Books from Wilson's period reveal that he employed the court to enforce "godly" discipline in the town. This policy was described by Bishop Thornborough in 1636, when he recalled the minister's behaviour in the 1620s: "he seemed to me to labour by all means to govern the people and Towne of Stratford ... according to his owne will, as if he had been another Calvin or Beza in Geneva".<sup>74</sup>

Wilson's impact on the peculiar court was evident in several areas. It is clear that he placed a greater emphasis than his predecessor on offences against the "First Table" of the Ten Commandments, such as Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy. No cases of Sabbath-breaking were reported in the presentments to John Rogers, which have been preserved from 1614 and 1618. However, the surviving presentments to Wilson in 1621 and 1622 recorded 6 separate cases of "profayning of the Saboth". Another 7 incidents were reported in presentments in 1627 and 1628.<sup>75</sup> The same pattern was apparent in cases of blasphemy: no incidents were reported in the surviving presentments to Rogers, but Wilson received at least six presentments for blasphemy in the 1620s.<sup>76</sup> This evidence is confirmed by the

surviving Act Books of the peculiar court, which show a marked increase in prosecutions for Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy during Wilson's period.<sup>77</sup>

As well as enforcing religious laws with greater strictness, Wilson employed the peculiar court to impose "godly" morality on the people of Stratford. In particular, he attempted to suppress drunkenness and "alehouse haunting". The surviving presentments from the 1620s reveal a sustained effort to eliminate drunkenness in the town: a total of 19 separate cases of drinking were reported in the parish visitations in this period, often involving large numbers of people.<sup>78</sup> The suppression of drinking was combined with an effort to restrict other "immoral" activities which were associated with the alehouse, such as playing cards, dancing and "singing ribaldry songs". At least five incidents of this kind led to presentments in the 1620s.<sup>79</sup>

It appears that Wilson's campaign to impose "godly reform" in Stratford intensified in the second half of the 1620s, and continued with equal vigour in the early years of the following decade. The suppression of Sabbath-breaking, drinking and "immoral" pastimes was particularly severe in 1627: a total of 20 people were reported for offences of this kind in the surviving presentments from that year.<sup>80</sup> In 1630 a list of fines for "swearing and other defaults" recorded 22 payments for swearing, 12 for Sabbath-breaking, and eight for drinking and related offences.<sup>81</sup> The latest surviving presentment, dated November 1633, reported five people for profaning the Sabbath, and another three for immoderate drinking.<sup>82</sup> Despite the lack of further material, it is reasonable to assume that Wilson continued to

impose "godly" discipline in the town throughout the remaining years of his ministry.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Wilson's "godly" reformation in Stratford. At one level, it seems that most people acknowledged the authority of the minister's court in this period, and accepted its sentences. The Act Books of 1622 and 1624 suggest that the majority of those presented for "ungodly" behaviour were prepared to admit their faults, pay their fines or perform penances. It even appears that visitors to Stratford were willing to submit to Wilson's regime. In 1625 a certain Richard Hill, a haberdasher from London, recited a penance in Holy Trinity for "unlawfull frequenting & haunting of Alehouses, & playeing at unlawfull games within the Towne".<sup>53</sup>

However, it is likely that Wilson's attempt to impose moral discipline had only a limited effect on public behaviour. Although the majority of people accepted the judgments of the peculiar court, most required more than one citation, and the threat of excommunication, before they complied. It was also common for people to commit offences repeatedly, without regard for the sanctions of the court. A well-documented example was provided by the minstrel, Stephen Lee. In May 1624 Lee was presented for "singinge prophaine & filthy songes". He appeared at the hearing, admitted his offence and received an admonition. In July 1624 he was presented for a second time, and ordered to perform a penance. Three years later he was reported again "for being drunk & singing ribaldry songs".<sup>54</sup> The outcome of this third incident is unknown. However, it is highly

improbable that the proceedings of Wilson's tribunal caused him to reform his behaviour.

While men such as Lee accepted the authority of Wilson's court, but remained cheerfully indifferent to the principles of "godliness", others were openly resentful of the minister's regime. In 1622 a certain Thomas Faux was reported for deriding the peculiar court as "the baudie courte". Two years later, a man reacted to receiving a citation to the parish tribunal by uttering the memorable phrase: "Shyte uppon the court".<sup>85</sup> This response was probably common. There can be little doubt that Wilson's attempt to impose "godly" discipline by suppressing popular recreations, and interfering in the private activities of people on the Sabbath, engendered hostility to his ministry.

On the other hand, it appears that Wilson's tenure at Stratford gave encouragement to the town's Puritan community. As was shown in the previous section, many of the magistrates of Stratford were personally committed to the vicar's policies. This fact was confirmed by the willingness of the churchwardens to present cases of "ungodly" behaviour in the 1620s. As well as imposing moral discipline on others, Wilson's court was able to protect the "godly" community from accusations of nonconformity. This was important both in Stratford and Luddington, a village with a history of Puritan dissent.<sup>86</sup> There were no prosecutions for nonconformity in the peculiar court during Wilson's period, though Wilson himself was twice prosecuted by the higher authorities for performing uncanonical services.<sup>87</sup>

Ironically, the second half of Wilson's ministry was dominated by a conflict between the vicar and his former supporters on the corporation, including prominent members of the "godly" community. The earliest indication of trouble came in 1623, when a question arose over the rights to trees felled in the churchyard. This issue came to a head four years later, when the corporation revoked its agreement to divide the income of the churchyard equally with the minister. In 1629 it attempted to reduce Wilson's annual maintenance by £20, following his refusal to continue a weekly lecture.<sup>88</sup> Thereafter, the two sides were involved in almost continuous litigation, which only ended with Wilson's death in 1638.

The dispute between Wilson and the corporation was characterised by great bitterness and recrimination. Wilson exploited his position as minister to advance his side of the argument: he used the pulpit of Holy Trinity to denounce the behaviour of leading members of the corporation, including his former protector against the confederates, Henry Smith.<sup>89</sup> On one occasion, the minister apparently refused to preach the funeral sermon of one of the aldermen; and when the curate, Simon Moore, agreed to deliver the sermon Wilson barred him from the pulpit.<sup>90</sup> On the other side, the corporation used their authority to undermine the minister's position: they even supported his prosecution in the High Commission in 1636.<sup>91</sup>

It should be emphasised that the conflict between Wilson and his former allies did not diminish Puritan influence in Stratford. Wilson retained control of the peculiar court, and continued to impose "godly" discipline in the 1630s. There is every indication



that the town's political leaders maintained their support for "godly" morality in the same period. In 1638, for example, they introduced new restrictions on the number of alehouses in the town.<sup>92</sup> Equally, the corporation continued to patronise "painful" churchmen. They offered Wilson's lectureship to Robert Harris in 1629, and nominated him as the vicar's successor a decade later. Harris was succeeded as lecturer by William Whateley, the celebrated preacher from Banbury, who was preaching in Stratford until 1637.<sup>93</sup>

The lectureships of Harris and Whateley re-asserted the principles of "godly religion" which Wilson introduced in the 1620s. The content of Harris' lectures can be deduced from his printed works, notably The Way To True Happiness, a collection of sermons published in 1631. These emphasised the importance of preaching in the building of God's church, and advocated the "godly" regulation of society.<sup>94</sup> Harris' commitment to "godly" discipline was reiterated in 1642, when he preached a sermon to the House of Commons urging the enforcement of "our good Laws touching The Lords Day, Swearing and Drinking".<sup>95</sup> Harris became an active parliamentarian in the civil war, and was driven from his living at Hanwell by the royalist army.

William Whateley was equally committed to the Puritan cause. In his home town of Banbury, Whateley played a leading role in the suppression of "ungodly" activities, such as Sabbath-breaking and "alehouse haunting", in the 1620s and 1630s.<sup>96</sup> He was a convinced nonconformist, and an outspoken opponent of the policies of Archbishop Laud. Whateley's preaching at Stratford and Banbury in the 1630s attracted members of the Puritan community from across the

Midlands, including Thomas Dugard of Warwick and Samuel Clarke of Alcester.<sup>97</sup> His influence was acknowledged by Bishop Thornborough in a report to Laud in 1637, when he expressed relief that his diocese was "less troubled with Non-Conformists since Mr Whateley of Banbury gave over his Lecture at Stratford".<sup>98</sup>

Clearly, the lectureships of Harris and Whateley demonstrated the continuing vitality of the Puritan movement in Stratford in the 1630s. Another influential member of the "godly" community in this period was the town schoolmaster, John Trapp. Trapp, the nephew of the curate of Holy Trinity, was appointed schoolmaster in 1624, and retained the position for thirty years. In 1636 he was also presented to the vicarage of Weston-upon-Avon, on the outskirts of the town, where he acquired a reputation as a learned and "painful" preacher. In the 1630s Trapp enjoyed close contacts with both the leaders of the corporation and Thomas Wilson, with whom he met to discuss sermons. He was also well known among the godly clergy of south Warwickshire.<sup>99</sup>

The schoolmaster's religious position was set out in The True Treasure, a compendious and wide-ranging treatise published in 1642. This advocated a robustly Puritan version of Protestantism. Trapp emphasised the importance of "true conversion" and the development of a "godly conversation". He urged Christians to apply the principles of religion in every aspect of their lives, and to obey the will of God in all things. In his more general discussions of the church, he asserted that the role of the preacher was paramount. Preachers were called by the Lord to be "good stewards and master-builders" of His

church. They were "co-workers with God, and fellow-labourers with the Angels, in the matter of mans salvation".<sup>100</sup>

The continued prevalence of "godly religion" in Stratford in the 1630s indicated the failure of the authorities to suppress the Puritan movement. This failure can be illustrated by examining the effect of specific Laudian policies on the town. The earliest challenge to the "godly" community came in 1633 with the re-issue of the "Book of Sports". Unsurprisingly, Thomas Wilson refused to read it. This act of disobedience was recorded in the proceedings against him in the High Commission in 1636.<sup>101</sup> More importantly, Wilson continued to prosecute "unlawful" activities on the Sabbath in the parish. The presentments and act book for 1633 recorded four separate cases of "profaning the Lords Day", including such pastimes as "travelling to fairs".<sup>102</sup>

Another threat to the Puritan movement in Stratford was the renewed emphasis on uniformity under Archbishop Laud. Until 1635, it seems that the national authorities were discouraged from clamping down on nonconformity in the town by the attitude of the local bishop. John Thornborough had prosecuted Thomas Wilson in the early 1620s, but was apparently reluctant to take further action against him. Even in 1636, when the minister was prosecuted in the High Commission, Thornborough informed Laud that he saw no reason to proceed against him: despite his former excesses, Wilson had recently "demeaned himself orderly & conformably, without presentment or complaint to me".<sup>103</sup>

The lenient approach of Bishop Thornborough was circumvented by the metropolitan visitation in 1635. This resulted in Wilson's suspension by Brent, and his subsequent prosecution in the High Commission. However, the effect of this action was limited. It appears that the town's magistrates exploited Brent's intervention to assist them in their own dispute with the vicar. Their readiness to exploit Wilson's plight was illustrated by the actions of the Puritan J.P., Henry Smith, who had played a leading role in imposing Wilson in 1619. In 1636 Smith petitioned Laud to continue the proceedings against him, alleging that he had "been scandalized by Mr Wilson in his preaching".<sup>104</sup> However, there is every indication that Smith and his fellows continued to promote the cause of Puritanism in Stratford. They employed William Whateley as a lecturer until 1637, and campaigned for the presentation of Robert Harris in the following year.

The limited impact of national intervention was further emphasised by the survival of Wilson's ministry. Despite his suspension, the vicar retained much of his influence. He continued to preach, both in Stratford and the surrounding area. The diary of the Warwick schoolmaster, Thomas Dugard, recorded Wilson's extensive contacts with the "godly" clergy and laity of south Warwickshire between 1635 and 1638.<sup>105</sup> In the same period Wilson pursued his lawsuit against the corporation, and secured the restoration of his maintenance in 1637.<sup>106</sup> The proceedings against him in the High Commission proved to be slow and laborious. Even without the support of the corporation, he managed to drag out his case for three years, and still held his benefice when he died in 1638.

It was only after Wilson's death that the crown was able to assert its authority in Stratford by presenting a conformist minister to Holy Trinity. Even this process was difficult and time-consuming because of the corporation's efforts to secure the living for Robert Harris. As a result, the parish was vacant between November 1638 and May 1640. In this period the minister's role was assumed by the curate, Simon Trapp, who was closely connected with the town's political leaders. Eventually, the imposition of Henry Twitchett ended twenty years of Puritan domination. Twitchett, a resolute conformist, went on to play a prominent role in the confused events in Stratford in the years preceding the civil war. These events are examined briefly in section four.

#### 4) The Coming of War, 1640-1642

In common with the rest of Warwickshire, Stratford was affected by a resurgence of Puritan activity between 1640 and 1641.<sup>107</sup> At the end of 1640 the "godly" clergy of the diocese of Worcester organised a petition against the new ecclesiastical canons, and the *Et Cetera* oath, which had been introduced in June. The petition arrived at Stratford in December 1640, where it received the assent of Francis Smith, the curate of Luddington and John Dowley, the minister of the neighbouring parish of Alveston. Later that month John Trapp, the town's schoolmaster, travelled to Warwick to attend a meeting of ministers from across the region, where the petition was finalised before it was sent to the capital.<sup>108</sup>

There is little direct evidence of the religious atmosphere in Stratford in this period. However, it is reasonable to assume that the town was in a condition of unusual religious excitement. An indication of this was provided by John Trapp's The True Treasure, which was published in January 1642. Trapp's volume was replete with eschatological imagery. It looked forward to the coming apocalypse, when "the Righteous Judge shall be revealed from Heaven, with thousands of his Saints, to convince the ungodly". In common with other Puritan authors in this period, Trapp connected the imminent Judgment with the need for religious and moral reform. He impressed the importance of a renewal of "godly" preaching, and a reformation of manners, in "these last and loosest times of the world".<sup>109</sup>

It appears that the political leaders of Stratford supported the cause of religious reform in the period 1640-1641. In December 1640 the corporation elected Lord Brooke as town recorder, following the death of the previous holder of the title, Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote. As Brooke was already established as a radical critic of the King's religious policies, his election indicated the corporation's support for reform in the established church. This was apparently confirmed in 1641, when the aldermen and burgesses initiated a series of alterations in the Guild Chapel: they directed that a "partition" between the chancel and the nave should be taken down, and the pulpit moved to a new, unspecified position.<sup>110</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine the impact of these changes; but it is reasonable to assume that they reflected the desire of the magistrates to undertake "godly" reform in the town.

The momentum for religious reform in Stratford faltered in 1642, however, as the national crisis between the King and parliament intensified. The members of the corporation were unable to provide clear leadership in the months preceding the outbreak of the civil war. Like the magistrates of Coventry, they avoided committing themselves to either side, and attempted to preserve their neutrality for as long as possible. The allegiance of Stratford was still undecided at the beginning of the military confrontation in July 1642, and was finally determined by intervention from outside.

The failure of Stratford to take a clear stand in 1642 can be explained by several factors. In part, it resulted from the loss of the Puritan leaders who had dominated the town in the 1630s. The most important of these was Thomas Wilson, who might well have galvanised support for parliament at the beginning of the war. Wilson's long-serving curate, Simon Trapp, also died in 1641. Similarly, two of the most prominent Puritans in the corporation, Henry Smith and Daniel Baker, died between 1640 and 1641.<sup>111</sup> The loss of the town's Puritan leadership coincided with the arrival of the new vicar, Henry Twitchett, who emerged as a committed royalist in 1642. It is also likely that the members of the corporation were fearful of military escalation, which threatened their own independence and the security of the town.

In June 1642 Henry Twitchett was apparently involved in an attempt to secure Stratford for the King. According to an entry in the corporation minute book, Twitchett and the bailiff, John Wolmer, were suspected of making a secret arrangement with the royalist army to

billet troops in the town. Both men were acquitted of the charge by the members of the corporation.<sup>112</sup> Unfortunately, the details of the alleged plot are vague, and there is no further record of it in the surviving documents. However, the incident suggests that Twitchett was an active royalist at an early stage of the war, and enjoyed the support of a faction in the corporation. The failure of the plot implies that the royalists in Stratford were relatively weak, and the majority of the town's magistrates preferred to remain neutral as the conflict unfolded.

In the following months, events in Stratford were dominated by external forces. The town's political leaders maintained an uneasy neutrality, apparently acquiescing with the demands of each side but committing themselves to neither. At the end of June, Lord Brooke held a muster at Stratford, which attracted over 600 volunteers from the town and the surrounding area. This was followed by a royalist muster in July, the results of which are unknown. In September 1642 the leading inhabitants of the town contributed £348 to Brooke's army as part of a loan raised throughout the county.<sup>113</sup> It is possible that this reflected their willingness to support the parliamentary cause, but it was not followed by any commitment to participate actively in the war.

Ultimately, the allegiance of Stratford was decided by outside intervention. In October 1642 the town was occupied by parliamentary soldiers falling back from Edge Hill. It remained in parliamentary hands until the following February, when it was captured by the royalist forces of Colonel Wagstaff. The royalist



occupation was short-lived. On February 25th, 1643, the town was re-taken by Brooke's army, and it was retained by parliament for the rest of the war. Naturally, it is extremely difficult to determine the allegiance of the inhabitants of Stratford during these events. In 1646 a number of individuals were presented to the county committee for allegedly supporting the royalist occupation, including a minority of the corporation. However, none of these cases resulted in sequestrations.<sup>114</sup> From the limited evidence available, it appears that most of the town's magistrates avoided committing themselves strongly to either side.

While the political leaders of Stratford were apparently neutral, the town's churchmen adopted clear positions in this period. Following Brooke's decisive intervention in 1643, Henry Twitchett deserted his living "& betooke himselfe to the Kings quarters & garrisons". As a result of this action, he was deprived by the county committee in 1646.<sup>115</sup> In contrast, John Trapp served as a chaplain to the region's parliamentary forces throughout the 1640s. He took the Covenant in 1645, and subsequently signed the Warwickshire Ministers Testimony, affirming his support for the presbyterian system of government in the English church.<sup>116</sup> The actions of Twitchett and Trapp reflected the wider involvement of the region's clergy in the early stages of the civil war, which is described in Chapter Nine.

## Chapter Nine: Religion and the Outbreak of Civil War in Warwickshire, 1640-1642

"Christ came to set a Sword, not only betweene the Good and Bad, but even among Professors of the same Christian Religion."

Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, 1641<sup>1</sup>

The ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s were designed to suppress nonconformity and enhance the status of the established church. These policies were almost entirely unsuccessful and counter-productive in Warwickshire. Their principal effect was to alienate the region's Puritan minority, while allowing its activities to continue largely unchecked. Between 1635 and 1639 the members of the "godly" community witnessed the promotion of a sacramental style of worship in the local church, and a renewed emphasis on uniformity in the metropolitan and episcopal visitations. This experience convinced them of the need for thorough reform in the established church. This desire for a "godly reformation" provided the background to the religious events in the region between the meeting of the Short Parliament and the outbreak of the civil war.

This chapter examines the religious divisions in Warwickshire in this period. The first section describes the activity of local people on both sides, and argues that the Puritan campaign to reform the established church was a decisive factor in securing the county for

parliament in 1642. The second section sets out the religious aspirations and fears of the region's parliamentarians. It argues that they were powerfully influenced by their experience of Laudian policies during the 1630s. The third section attempts to piece together the religious agenda of the county's royalists. It concludes that their position was based primarily on defending the established church from radical alteration, and resisting the perceived danger of separatism.

#### 1) Religion in Warwickshire, 1640-1642

The period from 1640 to 1642 was characterised by an atmosphere of religious excitement in Warwickshire. This affected all sections of society, and was manifested in a variety of ways. At a parish level, there was an increase in the number of disturbances in church services. The Quarter Sessions Book of Indictments recorded violent incidents in four parish churches between 1640 and 1642, compared with only two in the whole of the preceding decade.<sup>2</sup> Two of these cases involved conflict between the clergy and their parishioners. Robert Caddyman, the minister of Rowington, was indicted for using "scandalous words" against his churchwardens in 1640. In 1642 seven people were accused of "riotously assaulting and beating" the vicar of Napton in the chancel of his church.<sup>3</sup>

Another indication of the heightened religious tension in the region was an increase in anti-Catholic activity. In 1640 the constable of

Fillongley proceeded against recusants in the parish for the first time in a decade.<sup>4</sup> In 1641 the churchwardens of Kingsbury obtained a warrant to search out and gaol "a popish recusant from Hurley", together with his family.<sup>5</sup> The indictment of Catholics in the Quarter Sessions also gathered pace. On average, only three parishes per year presented recusants to the court at Warwick before the calling of the Long Parliament. This figure jumped to six parishes in 1641.<sup>6</sup> A further twelve presented recusants to the Quarter Sessions in the following year.<sup>7</sup>

Undoubtedly, these attacks on Catholics were connected with the general atmosphere of political uncertainty. They were also inspired by news of the Irish rebellion at the end of 1641. The events in Ireland were mentioned in a petition to parliament from the Warwickshire gentry in February 1642: this called for urgent "aide for Ireland ... where the life of our Protestant religion is in most desperate perill".<sup>8</sup> At a parish level, churchwardens' accounts show that ordinary people were also aware of the Irish "perill". In 1641 the churchwardens of Kingsbury provided charity for a displaced family of Irish Protestants.<sup>9</sup> In the following year, the churchwardens of Southam relieved twenty "men that came out of Ireland", and two gentlewomen "whose husbands were killed in their houses by the Rebels in Ireland".<sup>10</sup>

The fear of popery was expressed in a series of local anti-Catholic scares between 1641 and 1642. In November 1641 parliament was informed that Warwickshire was one of the centres of an impending Catholic uprising.<sup>11</sup> The Lord Keeper conveyed this news to the

sheriff, who issued a warning to the residents of Warwick on 18 November.<sup>12</sup> In the following month, the corporation of Coventry directed the town's inhabitants to provide muskets and ammunition for "defence and safeguard" in the event of a sudden attack.<sup>13</sup> The petitioners to parliament in February 1642 stated that they left Warwickshire "with heavy hearts" because of the prevalence of Catholic recusants in the county, "of whose rising they are in continuall fears".<sup>14</sup> These "fears" probably inspired the decision by the Quarter Sessions to double the night watch in the county in Epiphany 1642.<sup>15</sup>

The heightened atmosphere of religious excitement, together with the effective collapse of episcopal authority after 1640, encouraged the activity of the Puritan clergy in Warwickshire. The diary of Thomas Dugard recorded an increase in preaching activity in the area around Warwick between 1640 and 1642.<sup>16</sup> According to the biographer of Thomas Hall of Kings Norton, "lectures began to be set up" around Birmingham after 1641.<sup>17</sup> It appears that godly preachers were active across the whole region in this period, including smaller parishes with no tradition of nonconformity. "Stranger preachers" were recorded in the churchwardens' accounts of Kenilworth, Kineton and Ryton-upon-Dunsmore between 1640 and 1642.<sup>18</sup>

As well as redoubling their preaching efforts in the early 1640s, the Puritan clergy engaged in an organised campaign to redress the grievances of the preceding decade. This campaign was initially focused on the ecclesiastical canons of 1640, which codified many of the policies of the Laudian period. The *Et cetera* oath, requiring

the clergy to endorse the existing structure, ceremonies and doctrines of the Church of England, was the target of particular opposition. Samuel Clarke described the oath as "a dark and black cloud" in his autobiography.<sup>19</sup> To Thomas Hall, the minister of Kings Norton, it was "one of the greatest Innovations [that] hath beene heard of in our land".<sup>20</sup>

The campaign against the canons began with a petition of godly ministers in the diocese of Worcester. This was presented to the King at York in the summer of 1640. A second petition was drawn up following the assembly of the Long Parliament, directed against "the snare of the Oath, and some other burdens that lay upon us".<sup>21</sup> This seems to have been incorporated in a national Remonstrance at the end of the year, which was co-ordinated in Warwickshire by Thomas Dugard and Simeon Ashe. In December 1640 Dugard attended a meeting of seventeen ministers at Warwick, where the petition was finalised. Among those present were the most prominent members of the godly clergy from across the county. These included Samuel Clarke, John Bryan, John Gilpin, Josiah Packwood, Simon Moore of Frankton and Anthony Burges of Sutton Coldfield.<sup>22</sup>

The campaign against the 1640 canons prefigured the division of the Warwickshire clergy at the outbreak of the civil war. Two of the early supporters of the campaign, Thomas Warmestry of Whitchurch and Henry Twitchett of Stratford, sided with the King in 1642, but most of the others became active parliamentarians.<sup>23</sup> Samuel Clarke, John Bryan and Anthony Burges were conspicuous supporters of parliament in the early stages of the war.<sup>24</sup> Another nine of the men

who attended the meeting in Warwick in 1640 later affirmed their support for the Solemn League and Covenant in the Ministers Testimony of 1648.<sup>25</sup> It is reasonable to assume that these ministers constituted a hard core of support for the thorough reform of the established church, and advanced this policy consistently from the petition of 1640 to the military crisis of 1642.

It should be emphasised that many members of the reforming party in the Warwickshire clergy were not moderate "anti-Laudians". Their support for the Puritan cause was not conditioned solely by their experience of the Caroline church. John Bryan, Samuel Clarke, Josiah Packwood and John Gilpin of Knowle were confirmed nonconformists who were ejected after the Restoration.<sup>26</sup> Simon Moore and Thomas Hall of Kings Norton had been presented for nonconformity during the 1630s.<sup>27</sup> Naturally, such men were appalled by the "innovations" of the Laudian years, and regarded their reversal as an important priority in 1640. But they were not content to return to the established church as it had existed before Archbishop Laud. The importance of the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s was not that they created new opponents of the established church; it was rather that they antagonised an entrenched minority which was already committed to its reform.

It is clear that the Puritan clergy of Warwickshire were energetic supporters of parliament in the months preceding the outbreak of the civil war. Their influence was felt both nationally and locally. Samuel Clarke, who was a frequent visitor to London after 1640, was involved with the London clergy in the compilation of a remonstrance

to parliament in November 1641.<sup>28</sup> Robert Harris preached to the House of Commons at a public fast in May 1642.<sup>29</sup> At least two other local ministers, Richard Vines and Anthony Burges, preached sermons to the Commons during the first year of the war.<sup>30</sup> Subsequently, Richard Vines was nominated as one of the "orthodox divines" to be consulted by parliament "touching the reformation of church government and liturgie".<sup>31</sup>

In Warwickshire itself, Puritan ministers played an active role in rallying support for the parliamentary cause. This was acknowledged in the instructions to the commissioners of array in June 1642, which required them to proceed against "seditious Preachers" who undermined the King's authority "by their Sermons, Councells and other discourses".<sup>32</sup> The treatment of Anthony Burges of Sutton Coldfield and James Nalton of Rugby, who were driven from their parishes by royalist soldiers in August 1642, indicates that they were actively campaigning for parliament at the beginning of the war.<sup>33</sup> Two other local ministers, John Trapp of Stratford and William Cooke of Wroxhall, enlisted as chaplains in the parliamentary army in 1642.<sup>34</sup>

On the other side, those ministers who supported a "High Church" style of religion were among the most committed supporters of the King, though their activity and influence was less extensive than that of their Puritan counterparts. John Doughtie, the rector of Lapworth, was an active defender of Laudian policies in the early months of the Long Parliament. As a result, he was the target of a petition to the House of Lords, which alleged that he had preached



that "there was nothing to be disliked" in the 1640 canons, and asserted that parliament would have condemned them even if they had been issued by St Paul.<sup>35</sup> In 1642 Doughtie was forced to abandon his living and take refuge at Oxford. Subsequently, he was an active propagandist for the royalist cause.<sup>35</sup>

Another prominent High Churchman who supported the King was Francis Holyoake, the minister of Southam. Holyoake's commitment to High Church policies was described in detail in Chapter Five. His activities at the outbreak of the civil war were set out in the proceedings for his sequestration in 1647:

"Mr Holliock hath in his Church publicquely pressed & encouraged his parishioners to joyne in the Comission of Array at Southam, alleaging that he had Armes for them at his house therefore, & using many Arguments to perswade them." <sup>37</sup>

Further details of Holyoake's actions were recorded in a parliamentary pamphlet published in August 1642. This alleged that he "sustained in his house many Cavalieres at his owne charges". When Lord Brooke ordered a search of his property it uncovered "much Ammunition, as Saddles, Muskets and powder".<sup>38</sup>

The proceedings of the committee for plundered ministers recorded ten other Warwickshire churchmen who were active royalists in 1642. These included Thomas Holyoake, the son of Francis Holyoake and rector of Birdingbury, who joined the royalist army at the beginning of the war. Another sequestered minister, Henry Watkins of Sutton-under-Brailes, enjoined his parishioners to pay subsidies to support royalist forces. It was alleged that another, William Clarke of

Brinklow, had provided intelligence for the King's army. Three other local ministers, Robert Kenrick of Burton Dassett, Edward Mansell of Stoneleigh and Henry Twitchett of Stratford, abandoned their cures to join royalist garrisons in 1642.<sup>39</sup> As well as the ten known royalists, another twenty ministers were also sequestered, probably for their royalist sympathies.<sup>40</sup>

From the evidence available, it seems that the influence of royalist ministers was confined mainly to their own parishes. Even the most outspoken supporters of the King, Francis Holyoake and John Doughtie, do not appear to have been active outside their own livings. In part, this reflected the essentially defensive nature the royalist cause in 1642, which was based on preserving the established church rather than campaigning actively for its reform. In addition, the ministers who supported the King were far less committed to the travelling, preaching ministry than their Puritan counterparts. They relied instead on the church as an institution; and when this institution was undermined they had no alternative organisation to fall back on.

The religious division in the Warwickshire clergy was mirrored in the region's gentry. Between 1640 and 1641 there was a measure of agreement among the county's leaders in parliament on the need to dismantle the "innovations" of the Laudian period, such as the erection of altars in parish churches.<sup>41</sup> However, this accord was largely superficial. It is clear that the position of Brooke and his associates, who subsequently formed the core of the parliamentary leadership in the county, was radically different to the moderate,

anti-Laudian consensus established in 1640. Future royalists such as Lord Northampton and Lord Dunsmore were far less committed to major reform: they were content to reverse the "innovations" of Laudianism, but wished to restore the established church as it had existed before the 1630s.

This fact was demonstrated by the position adopted by Lord Brooke.

Before the assembly of the Long Parliament he composed a systematic treatise, A Discourse Opening the Nature of that Episcopacie which is Exercised in England, which was published in 1641. This castigated the excesses of the Laudian period, particularly the treatment of nonconformist ministers and the imposition of "innovations". However, Brooke took these abuses as the starting point for a wider critique of the government of the church. His work concluded that episcopacy should be abolished and a Presbyterian system erected in its place. It even suggested the toleration of certain separatist groups.<sup>42</sup> Brooke's radicalism led Clarendon to bracket him with Viscount Saye and Sele as one of the two peers who were "positive enemies of the whole fabric of the church".<sup>43</sup>

Brooke was undoubtedly exceptional in the extremism of his opinions. But he represented a larger group in the Warwickshire gentry which advocated the thorough reform of the established church. This was demonstrated by the composition of the county's parliamentary leadership in 1642. In those cases where the religious opinions of the parliamentary gentry can be ascertained from other sources, it appears that they were committed Puritans. Men such as Sir Edward

Peyto, William Purefoy of Caldecote and William Combe of Warwick were the patrons and friends of "painful" ministers.<sup>44</sup> Peter Burgoyne, one of Brooke's deputies in Coventry, had been presented for nonconformity in the episcopal visitation of 1636.<sup>45</sup> Other active parliamentarians, such as Richard Newdigate and John Temple, revealed a commitment to "godly religion" in their personal papers and correspondence.<sup>46</sup>

On the other side, it is more difficult to trace a consistent body of religious opinion which expressed itself in active support for the King. Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh, whose sympathy for a "High Church" style of religion was discussed in Chapter Four, was a committed royalist at the outbreak of the war. He attended the King's musters in July 1642, and accommodated the King at Stoneleigh when he was turned away from Coventry in the following month.<sup>47</sup> It seems that the leaders of the royalist party in Coventry had been active opponents of the town's nonconformists before 1642. Henry Million, one of the King's deputy lieutenants, had been responsible for the expulsion of Samuel Clarke in 1629.<sup>48</sup>

However, royalist gentlemen such as Leigh and Million were exceptional in their apparent commitment to a "High Church" style of religion. The Earl of Northampton, who led the King's forces at the outbreak of the war, was not associated with any distinctive religious position before 1642.<sup>49</sup> The same was true of the majority of the Warwickshire gentry who responded to the Commission of Array. Unsurprisingly, the royalist leadership in Warwickshire contained no prominent members of the Puritan community; but there is little

evidence that the King's supporters were "High Churchmen" either. The surviving sources, which are examined in section three, suggest that their religious position was based on defending the established church from radical reform and the dangers of separatism.

A similar division was apparent in the lower ranks of the laity, where the Puritan community provided the main support for the parliamentary cause. The early 1640s witnessed an increase in Puritan activity in parishes across the region. This was initially directed against the "innovations" of the Laudian period. Writing at the beginning of 1641, Anna Temple of Frankton rejoiced that "alters begin to go down apace, and railles in many places".<sup>50</sup> Later that year, the churchwardens of Kingsbury recorded a payment for "takeinge upp the Rayles that were about the Comunion Table".<sup>51</sup> In July 1641 the communion table was removed from the chancel of Holy Trinity in Coventry. The organ was removed from the church in November 1641.<sup>52</sup>

By the beginning of 1642, it seems that the Puritan laity had extended their aims to the complete reformation of the established church. In March 1642 a saddler from Birmingham was indicted in the Quarter Sessions "for saying the Book of Common Prayers is mere popery, and those that take part with it are no better than papists".<sup>53</sup> As the military crisis intensified, the godly laity provided active support for the forces of parliament. This support was decisive in Coventry, where an influx of several hundred "sectaries and schismatics" secured the town for parliament in August 1642.<sup>54</sup> According to Richard Baxter, who arrived in Coventry at the

end of the year, the town's inhabitants were "the most religious men of the parts round about".<sup>55</sup>

The importance of "godly religion" to the supporters of parliament was further demonstrated by the composition of Lord Brooke's army in 1642. It is clear that Brooke sought to recruit his troops mainly from the Puritan community. In a speech at the election of his captains at Warwick Castle in July 1642, he enjoined his soldiers "to fight the good fight for the Lord of hosts, your religion and freedom of your Consciences". He denounced the King's army as "papisticall malignants", and entreated his men to join "the defence of Gods true religion".<sup>56</sup> The Puritan zeal of Brooke's army was demonstrated by their behaviour in Coventry in August 1642, which was described in Chapter Seven.

It is less easy to deduce the religious opinions of the section of the population which actively supported the King. However, it is clear that many royalist soldiers were aggressively anti-Puritan. An anonymous "Letter out of Warwickshire", published in August 1642, remarked that the godly community in Rugby was in "great fear" of the King's army, "for they abuse honest people wherever they come". James Nalton, the town's Puritan minister, had been "violently assaulted" in his church by royalist soldiers.<sup>57</sup> Other godly churchmen were also attacked in this period. According to Edmund Calamy, Anthony Burges was driven from his living in Sutton Coldfield by "plundering and other terrors of the soldiers".<sup>58</sup> On his arrival in Coventry in November 1642, Richard Baxter stated that he met

thirty "worthy Ministers" who had fled "for safety from soldiers and popular Fury".<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine whether these attacks were inspired by loyalty to the established church or a more general animosity towards Puritans. There is no doubt that this animosity existed; and it may well have been fuelled by the increase in Puritan activity at the outbreak of the civil war. Apart from these attacks, there is no evidence of positive religious sympathies in the royalist forces. It is therefore impossible to identify the religious views of the majority of lay people who actively supported the King. However, it seems likely that religious idealism played a less decisive role in determining their actions than it did for their parliamentary counterparts.

Clearly, the influence of Puritanism was a critical factor in the outbreak of the civil war in Warwickshire. The activity of godly ministers rallied support for the parliamentary cause, and members of the Puritan gentry provided the political leadership which opposed the King in 1642. This group was only a fraction of the region's political elite. Equally, the Puritan soldiers and lay people who secured the county for parliament were a comparatively small and unpopular minority. But the impetus of godly religion allowed this group to seize the initiative in the military crisis of 1642. As importantly, it provided a clear justification for their actions, and a unifying agenda based on the reform of the church. This agenda is discussed in section two.

## 2) The Religious Aspirations and Fears of the Parliamentarians

The commitment to reform in the established church was at the heart of the parliamentary movement in Warwickshire. The cause of reform was linked with developments at a national level through the connections of the leaders of the parliamentary party, notably Lord Brooke. Brooke was a national figure before the military crisis of 1642, and was associated with radical opponents of the King's government from outside the county. Both John Pym and Viscount Saye and Sele were guests at Warwick castle in the 1630s.<sup>60</sup> Brooke himself spent lengthy periods in London in the 1630s; and he played a prominent role in the Lords following the assembly of the Long Parliament. His excursions to Warwick were increasingly frequent after 1640, but he continued to maintain regular contact with events in the capital.<sup>61</sup>

At a lower level, the connection between Warwickshire and the rest of the country was maintained by the personal contacts of the Puritan clergy. These contacts were well established before 1642. Ministers such as Thomas Dugard and John Bryan travelled widely throughout the Midlands during the 1630s.<sup>62</sup> Godly churchmen from other counties, such as Robert Harris of Oxfordshire and John Ley of Cheshire, preached in Warwickshire in the same period.<sup>63</sup> Inevitably, the association of Warwickshire ministers with their fellows in neighbouring areas intensified during the campaign against the 1640 canons. The petitioning of parliament also led ministers such as Samuel Clarke to participate in events in the capital.<sup>64</sup> Two other



members of the region's clergy, Anthony Burges and Richard Vines, preached to the House of Commons in the first year of the civil war.<sup>65</sup>

The supporters of parliament therefore understood the cause of religious reform in national as well as regional terms. The Puritan gentry regarded themselves as part of a community of saints spread throughout the whole Kingdom. This feeling intensified during the crisis of the early 1640s, when it appeared that the future of the "godly" church was at stake throughout the British Isles. The Warwickshire petition to parliament in 1642 addressed both local and national issues, as well as the situation in Ireland.<sup>66</sup> Preaching in 1643, Anthony Burges remarked that the struggle for True Religion was "universial for all places", and the Word of God was "a rule to England, to Scotland, to all [places] where it is promulgated".<sup>67</sup>

In arguing their case, the parliamentarians placed heavy emphasis on the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s. The policies of the Laudian years were mentioned in the sermons and writings of Warwickshire parliamentarians throughout the 1640s. Above all, the period was remembered for the persecution of godly Christians. In his treatise against episcopacy in 1641, Lord Brooke emphasised the suffering of nonconformists in the preceding decade: he claimed that "thousands" had endured the "losse of eares, goods, estates, livings [and] liberty".<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Samuel Clarke and Simeon Ashe recalled the persecution of Ephraim Huitt of Wroxall: they asserted in 1643 that Huitt had been driven to New England "by the Tyranny of the Prelaticall party".<sup>69</sup>

The experience of persecution in the 1630s influenced the parliamentarians in various ways. It reinforced their conviction that they represented the true "church": their religion was based on the idea of conflict, and tended to thrive in a climate of opposition.<sup>70</sup> Equally, persecution was understood as a judgment of God, indicating the need for the thorough reform of the established church. This view was expressed by the Warwickshire ministers who addressed parliament in the early 1640s.<sup>71</sup> It was reiterated in 1651 by Samuel Clarke, who observed that "when God exposeth us to Persecution he expects our speedy and thorow Reformation".<sup>72</sup>

The persecution of the Laudian years also indicated the nature of the reform that was necessary. Warwickshire parliamentarians were united in identifying the bishops and their courts as the principal agents of oppression in the 1630s. The most zealous supporters of parliament came to regard the abolition of episcopacy as essential. Lord Brooke devoted a whole book to the subject in 1641. Brooke condemned the Caroline bishops as "tyrannical Antichristian prelates". He depicted their courts as tools of repression, employed to "send out summons, exercise jurisdiction, sentence, fine [and] imprison".<sup>73</sup> Five years later, James Nalton, the minister of Rugby, rejoiced at the defeat of the "proud oppressing Prelacy", which "the Lord hates in his very soul".<sup>74</sup>

The experience of Laudian "formalism" also exerted a powerful influence on parliamentary ideas. Brooke's discourse on episcopacy in 1641 condemned at length the "formalisation" of the established church in the 1630s.<sup>75</sup> In 1642 this theme was restated in the Two

Petitions of the County of Warwick, which implored parliament to "go on reforming the church thorowly, freeing it from all superstitious innovations introduced by the prelates".<sup>76</sup> It has already been shown that the apparent promotion of formalism in the 1630s provoked bitter resentment throughout the Puritan community. After 1642 this resentment was translated into a desire to root out all vestiges of formalism in the church, and to establish a godly model of religion in the county and the nation as a whole.

The reaction against formalism was expressed in several ways. Firstly, parliamentarians urged the need for a vigorous preaching ministry throughout the church, designed to combat the influence of superstition and compensate for the attempted repression of preaching in the 1630s. This idea was pressed in national as well as regional terms. The Two Petitions urged parliament to maintain a "Consionable preaching Ministry ... throughout the whole Kingdome".<sup>77</sup> Preaching in 1646, James Nalton called for the resources of the established church to be devoted to "setting up a godly conscientious Ministry, in those places especially where the people are ready to perish for lack of vision".<sup>78</sup>

The corollary of this approach was the call to purge "dumb idolls" and "formalists" from the clergy. Richard Vines condemned non-preaching ministers as "idoll shepheards" in 1642.<sup>79</sup> In the same year, Thomas Hall of Kings Norton berated the curate of Henley-in-Arden as a "dumb dog".<sup>80</sup> The appeals of the Puritan clergy to remove such ministers were put into effect by Brooke's soldiers, who needed little encouragement to plunder "malignant" churchmen. The letters of

Nehemiah Wharton in August 1642 recorded the harsh treatment of "scandalous" clergymen in the garrison at Coventry: one victim was George Dale, the negligent vicar of Sowe, who was taken from his parish and "led ridiculously about the City".<sup>81</sup> After 1643 the ejection of "malignant" ministers was conducted by the County Committee. This body was responsible for the removal of forty-one Warwickshire churchmen between 1643 and 1646.<sup>82</sup>

Warwickshire parliamentarians also called for the moral reform of society as a whole. Again, this demand was linked to the experience of the Laudian period. It was commonplace for parliamentary preachers to blame the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s for a perceived decline in moral behaviour. In 1642 Richard Vines asserted that the Laudian clergy had deprived their flocks of moral guidance because they cared only about "Orders and Ceremonies".<sup>83</sup> Equally, it was widely accepted that the authorities had failed to prosecute blasphemers and Sabbath-breakers in the 1630s, and had actually encouraged the latter with the Book of Sports.<sup>84</sup> The obvious remedy to these policies was the vigorous imposition of godly discipline.

The cause of moral reform was given further impetus by the belief that the outbreak of war was a judgment of God, occasioned by the irreligion of the preceding decade. The appropriate response to this judgment was a moral reformation. This view was expressed by Samuel Clarke in 1643, when he defended the introduction of the Scottish Covenant to England:

"By reason of Gods hand which lies so heavie upon us in this present Judgement of the devouring sword ... [the parliament] have pitched upon this course as a speciall

means to pacifie Gods wrath, by ... a Reformation of our hearts and lives." <sup>85</sup>

This view was reiterated by John Bryan in 1647. Bryan asserted that "extraordinary publique judgements ... point out some common sin in a Nation", and argued that political instability was a sign that the moral reformation was not yet complete.<sup>86</sup>

The impetus for a moral reformation was established at the beginning of the 1640s. Inspired by the actions of parliament, the Puritan clergy redoubled their efforts to impose religious discipline on their flocks. In 1641, when Thomas Hall moved from the parish of Mosely to Kings Norton, he found himself "amongst a rude and ignorant people, amongst Drunkards, Papists, Atheists [and] Sabbath profaners". According to his biographer, his arrival came at a propitious moment, when "the Parliament began to sit & the work of Reformation began to appeare". As a result, Hall imposed a regime of strict moral discipline in the parish, so that his congregation "became in generall Tractable & Teachable".<sup>87</sup>

Puritan lay people were moved by a similar desire to promote a moral reformation. Anna Temple, writing to her daughter in January 1641, remarked that "sin was growen to a great height, but let it be our care to keepe our harts close to God in the use of his ordinances".<sup>88</sup> At a different level, it is evident that the region's parliamentary soldiers were moved by something of the same spirit in 1642. This was most evident in the the garrison of Coventry, where the work of reformation was conducted in an atmosphere of violence and high emotion. The houses of malignants were plundered, scandalous

ministers were forced from their parishes and publicly humiliated, and a prostitute was pilloried, ducked in the river and expelled from the town.<sup>89</sup>

Clearly, the parliamentary campaigns against episcopacy, "formalism" and immorality were powerfully influenced by the experience of the 1630s. The same was true of another central characteristic of parliamentary thinking: the fear of Catholicism, and the tendency to equate royalism with "popery".<sup>90</sup> In 1641 Lord Brooke asserted that there was no distinction between episcopacy and Catholicism, basing his argument mainly on the episcopal "abuses" of the preceding decade.<sup>91</sup> Speaking on the occasion of Brooke's election as Recorder of Warwick in August 1641, the town clerk, Edward Rainsford, asserted that "papall innovasion [was] comminge apace upon us" before the meeting of the Long Parliament.<sup>92</sup> Equally, it was usual for godly preachers to describe the religious policies of the 1630s as "popish". In 1643 Thomas Spencer, the minister of Budbrooke, even alleged that the Laudian bishops had been directly inspired by Catholicism, and had entertained Jesuits as their "familiar friends".<sup>93</sup>

Predictably, allegations of this kind were fuelled by the scares of Catholic uprisings in the early 1640s. The fear of popish insurrection was particularly evident in the Two Petitions to parliament in February 1642. The petitioners appealed for Catholics to be disarmed, and "all papists of ranke and quality so ordered as the Kingdome may feare no danger by them". This general fear of popery was combined with the belief that Catholics were engaged in a conspiracy at the highest levels of government, designed to turn the

King against the cause of True Religion. Thus the petitioners called for the removal of the King's "evill counsellors", and the explulsion of "popish Lords" from parliament.<sup>94</sup>

The belief that episcopacy had been exposed as "mere popery" in the 1630s, combined with the rumours of Catholic plots after 1641, encouraged local parliamentarians to regard royalists as "papists" at the outbreak of the civil war. At the election of his captains in August 1642, Lord Brooke described the conflict between King and Parliament as a struggle between Protestants and Catholics.<sup>95</sup> Writing in the following year, Samuel Clarke described the many "priests and Jesuited papists" who had allegedly joined the royalist army, "whose Romish plots are only to advance the Catholique cause and ruine our religion".<sup>96</sup> The strength of this idea was revealed in the private correspondence of the region's parliamentarian families, in which the King's supporters were routinely described as "papists". For example, Robert Knight of Moseley described the killer of Lord Brooke as a "wicked divelish papist" in a letter to his brother in March 1643.<sup>97</sup>

Inevitably, the perception that the war was a struggle against Catholicism provoked a wave of apocalyptic speculation. As early as 1640, Lord Brooke had invoked the spectre of Antichrist in his discourse against the bishops, and had even described the Archbishop of Canterbury as "an English Antichrist".<sup>98</sup> As the political crisis gathered momentum after 1641, the region's parliamentarian preachers resorted freely to the language of the apocalypse. In May 1642

Robert Harris implored the House of Commons to continue the reform of the church, concluding with the following plea:

"Set your hands to ... this *Bloody Beast*, which bites worst in her last conflict ... till the *Lord* shall be please'd to empty the *Fifth Viall* upon the throne of the Beast, and cast the great mil-stone into that Sea of Blood." <sup>99</sup>

The publication in 1643 of Ephraim Huitt's eschatological treatise, The Whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained, was a further indication of the importance of millenarian ideas in this period. The region's Puritan ministers, notably Samuel Clarke and Richard Vines, continued to employ eschatological imagery in their sermons and books throughout the 1640s.<sup>100</sup>

Clearly, Puritanism supplied the parliamentarians of Warwickshire with an agenda for ecclesiastical and moral reform, and established the religious context for their conflict with the King. It also provided their main justification for opposing royal authority. The parliamentarians did not advocate the overthrow of the crown at the beginning of the war. Indeed, Samuel Clarke wrote in 1642 that "the killing of a King is a crime so hainous that ... any death is too good for such a crime".<sup>101</sup> The issue in 1642 was the extent of royal authority, and the circumstances in which it could be lawfully challenged. The principles of "godly religion" were essential in framing the answer to this question.

To an important extent, the principle of disobedience was already acknowledged by the region's nonconformists. The refusal to observe the ceremonies of the established church, which were enjoined by the King's authority, was a tacit act of defiance. The justification for



this was well established. It was set out, in its most radical form, by Humphrey Fenn of Coventry in 1633. Fenn asserted that Christians owed their ultimate obedience to God rather than the authorities of the external church; if they were commanded to observe an idolatrous ceremony they were obliged to refuse "in defence of Christian liberty".<sup>102</sup> The essentials of Fenn's argument were accepted, with varying degrees of qualification, by local nonconformists throughout the 1630s.

This framework of thinking, based above all on the concept of the "godly church" which owed direct allegiance to God, was adaptable to the crisis of 1642. The principle of passive disobedience for the sake of "Christian liberty" was extended to justify active rebellion in defence of True Religion. In this way the leaders of the Puritan community were able to overcome their social conservatism by explaining their opposition to the King in terms of obedience to God. This position was strengthened by the belief that the royalist cause amounted to "popery", and that the defeat of the bishops was bound up with the wider struggle against the forces of Antichrist.

In 1643 Samuel Clarke published the only systematic justification of the rebellion by a Warwickshire author. The immediate aim of his pamphlet, entitled Englands Covenant proved Lawfull and Necessary, was to defend the introduction of the Scottish Covenant in England, but its more general purpose was to justify the war against the King. Clarke based his argument on "the defence of the true Protestant Religion". He emphasised the necessity for Christians to serve God and defend His Truth, and dwelt on the alleged connection between

royalism and popery.<sup>103</sup> Writing twenty years later, another Warwickshire parliamentarian, Thomas Hall of Kings Norton, expressed similar sentiments when he defended the rebellion against the King:

"Few great men are good men, and therefore follow not any, bee hee never so great or good, any further than hee follows Christ. Yea, should any commaund you to break the Lawes of God you must chuse rather to obey God than man. 'Tis no dishonour to the Kings on earth to see the King of Kings obeyed before them." <sup>104</sup>

### 3) The Religious Aspirations and Fears of the Royalists

It was shown in sections one and two that religious issues were paramount to the parliamentarians in Warwickshire. This was not the case for the county's royalists. Above all, the royalist position was based on the preservation of order, expressed in loyalty to the crown and fear of the radicalism of parliament. Religion was important in this context; but it was not the driving force for the supporters of the King that it was for Brooke and his allies. Accordingly, ecclesiastical issues were less prominent in the writings of Warwickshire royalists than in those of their parliamentary counterparts, and it is more difficult to discern their religious agenda at the outbreak of the war.

This problem was compounded by the fact that the royalist position was essentially defensive. The majority of the King's political supporters were motivated by the challenge to established authority represented by his opponents; they were not active campaigners with a positive programme of reforms. This was clearly the case in

matters of religion. Whereas parliamentarians such as Brooke had played a major role in the debate about the church from 1640, many royalists had remained silent. They were stung into action by the political and military crisis of 1642. Subsequently, they based their religious position on protecting the church from radical reform, a policy which was inevitably less conspicuous than that of their adversaries.

In June 1642 the county's royalists delivered a "Humble Remonstrance and Peticon" to the King. Unlike the parliamentary petition in February 1642, the "Remonstrance" was highly defensive and largely secular in tone, containing only one reference to "the true Protestant Religion".<sup>105</sup> To a certain extent, this difference can be explained by the context of military crisis in which the royalist document was composed. However, this in itself cannot account for the relative neglect of religion in the "Remonstrance", since it dealt at some length with a number of other issues. Equally, it is clear that parliamentary declarations from the same period, notably Brooke's speech at the election of his captains in July 1642, were dominated by the language of religious conflict.<sup>106</sup>

Despite its brevity, the reference to religion in the "Remonstrance" provides the best evidence of local royalist attitudes towards the established church. The section was written as follows:

"We rejoyce when we consider your Majesties most pious and tender care, soe often repeated by ... your gracious Declaracons and expressions, to defend & mainetayne the true Protestant Religion by law establisht against Separatists of what kynd soever."<sup>107</sup>

Clearly, the emphasis was on the protection of the established church from radical alterations. This implied support for episcopacy. Equally, it implied the maintenance of existing forms of religious discipline, and a commitment to uniformity under the Book of Common Prayer. As such, it appears that the royalist position was a defensive reaction to the religious demands advanced by the parliamentarians.

It should be emphasised that the "Remonstrance" did not advocate a return to the aggressively anti-Puritan policies of the 1630s. Nor did it contain any defence of the "innovations" introduced by Archbishop Laud. Indeed, its tone was broadly sympathetic to the early reforms and "sundry good Lawes" which had been introduced by the Long Parliament, though it made no direct reference to the dismantling of Laudian policies after 1640.<sup>109</sup> Essentially, the religious position of the "Remonstrance" was defined by the threat to the church from Puritan radicals; it was not assertively "High Church".

This impression is supported by evidence of the religious beliefs of active royalists in Warwickshire. From the limited sources available, it seems that the King drew much of his support from moderate defenders of the Church of England. The leader of the King's forces in the region, Spencer Compton, Earl of Northampton, expressed little sympathy for a Laudian style of worship in the early stages of the Long Parliament. In May 1641 he joined Brooke in subscribing to a petition from the House of Commons condemning "divers innovations and superstitions brought into the church".<sup>109</sup> Northampton's

reservations about the Caroline church were apparently dispelled by the reforms of 1641, while his fear of parliamentary extremism led him to support the King at the beginning of 1642.

Sir Thomas Leigh of Kings Newnham, Lord Dunsmore, was another leading royalist who apparently supported a moderate, non-Laudian religious settlement. Despite the High Church sympathies of his father <sup>110</sup>, Dunsmore was an active opponent of the Laudian church in the early 1640s. Like Northampton, he signed the Lords' petition against "innovations" in May 1641.<sup>111</sup> As late as January 1642 he was appointed to the Lords' committee to examine the charges of treason against eleven bishops.<sup>112</sup> By the summer of 1642, however, Dunsmore had emerged as an active supporter of the King: he responded to the commission of array in June 1642, and attended the royalist musters in the following month. Clearly, the royalism of men such as Northampton and Dunsmore was based more on loyalty to the crown, and the desire to protect the established church from excessive reform, than support for a High Church style of religion.

The most comprehensive defence of the King's position by a Warwickshire author was composed by John Doughtie, the rector of Lapworth, in 1644. Doughtie was an outspoken supporter of the ecclesiastical canons of 1640, who abandoned his living for Oxford at the beginning of the war. Two years later he published The Kings Cause, a pamphlet designed to "improve that dutie and loyall respect in the mindes of reasonable men which they owe to their Sovereigne".<sup>113</sup> Despite its author's High Church leanings, The Kings Cause presented a moderate exposition of the royalist position, aimed

at the widest possible audience. Its central theme was the need to preserve political and religious order by defending royal authority and the established church.

Doughtie's starting point was the need for order in society. He argued that this was essential for both social and religious reasons: it protected the commonwealth from disruption and war, and reflected the natural stability ordained by God. Ultimately, the preservation of order depended on the authority of the King. This was justified in both political and religious terms. The monarch commanded respect and allegiance because of his hereditary status, which provided the continuity essential to a civil society. Equally, his position was part of the natural order instituted by the Lord, who had "entrusted him with the charge of a great people". As a result, any challenge to royal authority was bound to precipitate disorder and chaos, a fact demonstrated by the "inexpressible calamities" of the civil war.<sup>114</sup>

Doughtie emphasised too the role of the established church in maintaining order. The bishops, who governed the church in the King's name, maintained the discipline and uniformity which was essential to the worship of God. In this way they prevented the spread of separatism and the attendant perils of social disintegration. Accordingly, any attack on episcopacy was dangerous for two reasons: it undermined royal authority and it threatened to fragment the church, thereby damaging society as a whole. Again, Doughtie asserted that his position had been vindicated by events:

the collapse of episcopal authority had encouraged the outbreak of civil war and an epidemic of separatism.<sup>115</sup>

It is probable that Doughtie's argument in 1644 reflected a religious consensus on the royalist side. His emphasis on social order reiterated the position of the Warwickshire "Remonstrance" at the outbreak of the war. Although religious issues were less prominent in the "Remonstrance", its religious position was implicitly similar to that of Doughtie's pamphlet. It emphasised the need to preserve royal authority and the established church for "the peace of the Kingdome". It also referred to the dangers of separatism, commending the King's declarations against "Separatists of what kynde soever".<sup>116</sup> Essentially the same position was adopted by Christopher Harvey, the minister of Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, in 1642. Harvey condemned the parliamentarians for challenging established authority in the state and the church, and thereby endangering the God-given order of society.<sup>117</sup>

Undoubtedly, the appeal to protect the existing social order was attractive to a majority of the political leaders of Warwickshire. In particular, it won the support of the county's high-ranking gentry. The commission of array in June 1642 was attended by two peers, Northampton and Dunsmore, the baronets Sir Robert Fisher and Sir William Boughton, and the region's wealthiest landowner, Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh.<sup>118</sup> Ann Hughes has estimated that 90 of the county's gentry committed themselves to the royalist cause in the course of the civil war, with varying degrees of enthusiasm and

effectiveness. This contrasted with only 48 who were active parliamentarians.<sup>119</sup>

However, it should be stated that the emphasis on defending the established political and social order was as much a weakness as an advantage to the royalists. It deprived them of a positive agenda for political and religious activity. To an important extent, this allowed Brooke and his allies to seize the political initiative in the early months of 1642, and to achieve a decisive military position at the beginning of the war. In many cases the royalist gentry delayed their participation in the conflict until it was effectively too late. The most celebrated example was Sir Richard Shuckborough of Shuckborough, a supporter of the King in parliament, who gave no support to the royalist forces until the morning of the Battle of Edge Hill.<sup>120</sup>

It should also be stressed that the desire to preserve order was as easily expressed in neutrality as in active support for the King. This was not the case on the parliamentary side, where a serious commitment to "godly reform" usually translated into active support for Brooke's army. Ann Hughes has estimated that 150 of the county's gentry gave no support to either side during the civil war. This amounted to just over half the region's leading families.<sup>121</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the majority of these were social conservatives, whose neutrality reflected their natural desire to protect their families and estates. If this conjecture is accurate, they were much closer to the political and religious agenda of the royalists than the parliamentarians. However, instead of supporting



the King, their defensive position kept them out of the conflict altogether.

## Conclusion

Puritan authors of the mid-seventeenth century were in no doubt that the 1630s had been a period of great impiety in the Church of England. It had been the decade of "episcopal tyranny", when the preaching ministry had been suppressed and godly Christians persecuted. In the words of one Warwickshire commentator, it had been a time when "altars, images and popish trash abounded".<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, these writers greatly exaggerated the extent and effectiveness of the bishops' "tyranny" in this period: as was shown in Chapter Three, the Puritan ministry in Warwickshire survived virtually intact throughout the reign of Charles I. Nonetheless, the godly authors of the 1640s and 1650s were justified in regarding the 1630s as a distinctive period. The decade was characterised by a sustained and coherent attempt on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities to promote a sacramental style of worship, combined with a renewed effort to suppress Protestant nonconformity.

The impact of Laudian policies was apparent in many aspects of religious life in Warwickshire. The re-introduction of the Book of Sports in 1633 challenged the authority of the Puritan clergy. Similarly, the visitations of the archdeaconry of Coventry between 1635 and 1639 were notable for their strong emphasis on ecclesiastical uniformity. This was combined with a sustained effort to improve the upkeep and decoration of parish churches.<sup>2</sup> The same period witnessed the introduction of "innovations" in the local

church: the practice of bowing at the name of Jesus, and the conversion of communion tables into "altars". Considered individually, these reforms can be regarded as relatively modest. However, their cumulative effect was to promote a more ceremonial style of worship, based on the church as an institution rather than the preaching of the Word.

The experience of Warwickshire in the 1630s was repeated in other parts of England. The work of William Hunt on Essex, Anthony Fletcher on Sussex and Andrew Foster on the archdiocese of York has shown that there was a trend in these regions towards a more sacramental, aggressively anti-Puritan version of Protestantism in the 1630s.<sup>3</sup> This trend is confirmed by other local research in progress, notably Lee Clarke's study of the diocese of Norwich.<sup>4</sup> Thus the situation in Caroline Warwickshire conforms to a general pattern, which supports Nicholas Tyacke's thesis that the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s were significantly different from those of the Jacobean period. This challenges the position of Peter White, Kevin Sharpe and G. W. Bernard, who have argued that there were no major changes in the Church of England during the reign of Charles I.

It should be stated, of course, that the implementation of "Laudian" policies was less thorough in Warwickshire than in some other regions.<sup>5</sup> This undoubtedly reflected the personalities of the bishops responsible for the county: neither Robert Wright of Lichfield nor John Thornborough of Worcester was an energetic supporter of Laud's regime. However, it is significant that both were prepared to

introduce changes in the local church, even if these were not pressed as far as their superiors might have desired. This suggests that the impact of ecclesiastical reform was not confined to those areas, such as East Anglia and Yorkshire, which were served by zealous Laudian bishops in the 1630s.

The evidence from Warwickshire also reveals the impact of Laudian policies on the Puritan community. It was shown in Chapter Three that the region's "painful" clergy espoused a highly distinctive brand of Protestantism, based on the preaching ministry, "godly morality", and the rejection of clerical "formalism". This outlook was shared by Puritan layfolk. It is clear that this style of religion was challenged fundamentally by the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s. As a result, the region's Puritans were the group most severely affected by these policies. Indeed, the preoccupations of the "godly" community, and their belief in the righteousness of persecution, probably led them to exaggerate the pernicious impact of Laud's regime.

Ironically, despite the provocation of the county's Puritans, few effective measures were taken to suppress their activities. In part, this was because of weaknesses in the system of ecclesiastical discipline. It also reflected the failure of the local bishops to suppress Puritan lectureships and preaching circuits. This meant that "godly" ministers such as Richard Vines, Simon Moore of Frankton and Tristram Diamond of Foleshill were free to continue their ministries throughout the 1630s. The prosecution of other divines for nonconformity only reinforced their opposition to the church

hierarchy, and encouraged a general atmosphere of "persecution".<sup>6</sup> As Ann Hughes has observed, this situation was the "worst of all worlds" for the Laudian regime.<sup>7</sup>

The counter-productive nature of Laudianism in Warwickshire was evident in other regions as well. William Hunt's study of Essex has demonstrated the survival of the Puritan ministry throughout the 1630s, despite the more aggressive episcopal policies in the area. Nonetheless, the experience of persecution increased the hostility of local Puritans to the church hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> The work of Evans on Norwich, Holmes on Lincolnshire and Fletcher on Sussex suggests that this pattern was repeated across the country.<sup>9</sup> William Lamont has suggested that the personal rule of Charles I "created the maximum of odium with the minimum of effectiveness".<sup>10</sup> This verdict seems particularly relevant to the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s.

Inevitably, local research sheds a greater light on the practical effects of the crown's policies than the ideological motives behind them. However, the experience of Warwickshire has some relevance to the wider debate about the role of "Arminian" theology in the Church of England. It was shown in Chapter Four that the proponents of "Laudian" policies in the region were not motivated primarily by the rejection of Calvinist doctrines. Rather, they supported an institutional version of Protestantism, based on the sacraments rather than preaching. Obviously, this does not prove that the leaders of the church were orthodox Calvinists. Equally, it is possible that the Laudian clergy in other parts of England were influenced by "Arminian" ideas. Nonetheless, the situation in

Warwickshire demonstrates that support for a Laudian style of religion did not necessarily depend on doctrinal Arminianism.

On the other side, there is little evidence that Warwickshire Puritans based their hostility to Laud's regime on the issue of Arminian theology. Indeed, they hardly mentioned doctrinal matters in their otherwise wide-ranging condemnations of the Caroline church.<sup>11</sup> As was shown in Chapter Three, the main areas of conflict between the Puritan clergy and the church hierarchy were the Book of Sports, the promotion of "formalism", and the perceived suppression of preaching. In this, the situation in Warwickshire resembled that in contemporary Essex. William Hunt has shown that Puritans in Essex opposed the Laudian church because it seemed to encourage "formalism" and undermine the preaching ministry. These issues, "rather than any matters of church organisation or theological dogma", were the "fundamental source of tension between Puritanism ... and the crown".<sup>12</sup>

At a local level, the religious tensions of the 1630s were caused by the conflict between the Puritan concept of Christianity, based on preaching and the rejection of "formalism", and the more institutional and ceremonial religion promoted by the church authorities. This conflict was more important than the theological controversy about the doctrine of predestination, which has been emphasised by Nicholas Tyacke and his critics. Tyacke is correct to assert that Laud's policies destabilised the established church and provoked a Puritan backlash against the bishops. His depiction of this process as a struggle between Calvinists and "Arminians" is far more

problematical. The theological motives behind the Archbishop's policies will probably remain an open question.

# Appendix I: Puritans Presented to the Church Courts

## Worcester Visitation Act Book, 1613-1618

Year	Parish	Offence	Folio
1613	Lapworth	Unlicenced man allowed to preach	50r
1614	Luddington	Silenced minister allowed to preach	13v
1614	Haseley	Communion received by non-kneelers	60v, 65r
1614	Hatton	Communion received by non-kneelers	61r, 64v
1614	Alcester	Parishioners gadding to sermons	66r
1615	Stratford	Stratford parishioners marrying without the ring at Hatton	22v
1615	Hatton	Communion received by non-kneelers	69r
1615	Henley	Unlicenced man allowed to preach	78v
1616	Oxhill	Unlicenced minister allowed to preach	32r
1616	Haseley	Churchwardens failed to present non-kneelers	85r
1616	Kinnerton	Parishioner refused to take off hat	89r

Source: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, 2760/802



# Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1614

Parish	Offence	Page #
Kenilworth	Parishioners refused to kneel for Com.	6
Spotswell	Minister performed uncanonical marriage?	7
Arley	Puritan minister neglected prayers and catechism	9
Shustocke	Parishioners gadding to sermons	14

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/29

Total number of parishes recorded: 65

# Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1617

Parish	Offence	Page #
Arley	Minister failed to wear surplice and performed uncanonical baptisms	2

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/35

Total number of parishes recorded: 77

Note: there were no presentments for Puritan offences in the  
episcopal visitation of 1620. Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/40.

Lichfield Metropolitan Visitation, 1635

Parish	Offence	Page *
Baneston	Parishioners gadding to sermons	5
Baddesley	Surplice not worn; Parishioners refused to kneel for Com., gadding to sermons	10
Fillongley	Parishioner refused to take off hat	16
Knowle	Minister admin. communion to non-kneelers, failed to wear surplice, performed uncanonical baptisms	21
Antley	Parishioners gadding to sermons?	34
Foleshill	Parishioners refused to kneel for Com.	51
Leamington-H.	Parishioner preaching on Sundays	90
Sowe	Parishioners refused to kneel for Com., reviled surplice, conventicle suspected	62-3
Stoneleigh	Parishioners refused to kneel, gadding	90
Rugby	Parishioner refused to kneel for Com.	116

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/56

Total number of parishes recorded: 111

# Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1636

Parish	Offence	Folio
Coventry, St M.	Parishioner refused to stand for Creed	29v
Stivichall	Surplice worn uncanonically, preaching out of pulpit	31v
Birmingham	Parishioner refused to kneel for Com.	36r
Coleshill	Com. received by non-kneeler	40v

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/58

Total number of parishes recorded: 109

# Lichfield Episcopal Vistation, 1639

Parish	Offence	Page #
Bilton	Parishioners gadding to sermons	32
Bulkington	Parishioners refused to kneel for Com.	34
Exhill	Parishioners refused to kneel for Com.	36
Harbourgh	Parishioner refused to stand for Creed, or remove hat	41
Hillmorton	Com. received by non-kneelers	41

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/63

Total number of parishes recorded: 61

### Surviving Papers of Lichfield Consistory Court

Year	Parish	Offence
1615	Wishaw	Parishioners gadding to "puritan preacher"
1617	Burton H.	Com. admin. to non-kneelers, surplice not worn, Prayers neglected
1618	Foleshill	Silenced minister allowed to preach
1628	Arley	Com. admin to non-kneelers, surplice not worn, baptism without cross, conventicle formed
1628	Handsworth	Parishioner gadding

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, consistory court papers, B/C/5

### Surviving Presentments to Worcester

Year	Parish	Offence
1630	Tanworth	Parishioners gadding, avoiding Prayers

Source: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, 2302/795.02/3,  
f. 544

# Surviving Papers of the High Commission

Year	Parish	Offence
1635	Stratford	Minister "conformable in nothing"
1637	Brinklow	Parishioner refused to kneel for Com., condemned conformist clergy
1638	Birmingham	Parishioners refused to be churched, condemned clergy, conventicle formed

Source: Public Record Office, SP16/342, f.19, SP16/370/91, SP16/388/41

\* My own pagination.

## Appendix II: Deficiencies in the Fabric of Parish Churches Reported to the Courts

### Worcester Visitation Act Book, 1613-1618

Year	Parish	Deficiency	Folio
1614	Budbrooke	Bells faulty	55r
1614	Studley	Churchyard out of order	55r
1614	Norton	Bells faulty	58r
1614	Wolford	Church out of repair	58r
1615	Atherstone	Churchyard out of order	16v
1615	Burton Hth.	Bells faulty	17v
1615	Kineton	Churchyard out of order	25r
1615	Hatton	Church out of repair	69v
1615	Alcester	Church out of repair	69v
1615	Budbrooke	Bells faulty	70r
1615	Studley	Church out of repair	73r
1616	Hunnington	Seats in disrepair	26v
1616	Treddington	Church out of repair	26r
1616	Studley	Churchyard out of order	73r
1616	Salford P.	Bells faulty	96r

Source: Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, 2760/802

# Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1614

Parish	Deficiency	Page #
Burton Dasset	Aisle in disrepair	1
Wolfhamcote	Churchyard out of order	3
Ashow	Church out of repair	5
Cubbington	Pulpit out of repair	5
Dasset Priors	"Steeple very weak"	5
Shustocke	Churchyard out of order	14
Harborough	Windows broken	18
Stivichall	Churchyard out of order	18

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/29

Total number of parishes recorded: 65

# Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1617

Parish	Deficiency	Page #
Allestrey	Churchyard out of order	1
Allesley	Pew in disrepair	1
Burton D.	Aisle in disrepair	4
Chesterton	Pillars in disrepair	14
Curdsworth	Church needs shingling	14
Harborough	Church needs plastering	16
Grandborough	Church needs paving, windows broken	18

Parish	Deficiency	Page
Nuneaton	Windows broken	24
Seckington	Churchyard out of order	29
Stivichall	Churchyard out of order	30
Stoke	Windows broken	32
Sowe	Churchyard out of order	32

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/35

Total number of parishes recorded: 77

#### Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1620

Parish	Deficiency	Folio +
Hillmorton	Church pavement insufficient	i 2r
Stivichall	Churchyard out of order	i 12r
Seckington	Bells and frame faulty	i 17v
Arley	Churchyard out of order	ii 3r
Curdworth	Churchyard out of order	ii 4r
Chilvers C.	Churchyard out of order	ii 4v
S. Coldfield	Churchyard out of order	ii 6r
Honningham	Windows broken, bells faulty	ii 12r
Willoughby	Churchyard out of order	ii 13v

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/40

Total number of parishes recorded: 104



Lichfield Metropolitan Visitation, 1635

Parish	Deficiency	Page *
Bicknell	Roof and floor out of repair	8
Baxterley	Churchyard out of order	9
Baddesly Ensor	Chapel out of repair	9
Baddesly C.	Churchyard out of order	10
Churchover	"Church and font in decay"	11
Coleshill	"Church and chancell windowes in decay"	12
Earlsdon	Church and chancel out of repair	14
Birmingham	Chancel in disrepair	16
Hampton A.	Churchyard out of order	18
Merriden	Churchyard out of order	23
Wileland	Churchyard out of order	30
Shustocke	Churchyard out of order	38
Bobinhill	"Church is not sound"	45
Foleshill	Chancel in disrepair, churchyard out of order	51
Leamington H.	Chancel in disrepair, churchyard out of order	52
Nuneaton	Churchyard out of order	58
Sowe	Chancel in disrepair; com. table "cannot be kept clean from birds and dust falling from the roof"	61
Bagginton	Church out of repair	78
Hardwick P.	Seats in disrepair	81
Marston P.	Floor in disrepair, ch.yard out of order	82

Parish	Deficiency	Page
Milverton	Steeple in disrepair	83
Whitacre Inf.	"Steeple in great decay", ch.yard faulty	86
Whitacr Sup.	"The church a little out of repaire but in repayringe"	88
Ichington	Churchyard out of order	94
Clifton	Chancel in disrepair	100
Leamington P.	Churchyard out of order	100
Bourton & D.	Churchyard out of order	108
Grandborough	Steeple in disrepair	110
Ladbroke	Steeple in disrepair, church and chancel floor broken	111-2
Willoughby	Steeple, bells and frame, and "other things" in disrepair	121

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/56

Total number of parishes recorded: 111

#### Lichfield Episcopal Visitation, 1639

Parish	Deficiency	Page *
Birmingham	Chancel in disrepair	5
Coleshill	"Noe reformation" after visit by official	8
Elmdon	Church and chancel out of repair	10
Grendon	Church and porch out of repair	11

Parish	Deficiency	Page
Shustocke	Chancel "wants glassing and whyting"; "nothing yet reformed" after visit by official	18
Packington	Repairs made after visit by official	26
N. Regis	Bell faulty	27
C. Lawford	Churchyard out of order	34
Churchover	Churchyard out of order	34
Clifton	Steeple "in greate decay"	35
Braneton	Churchyard out of order	37
Hardwick P.	Faults repaired "for the most parte" after visit by official	42
Ichington	Chancel seats and ceiling to be repaired after visit by official	42
Napton	Chancel in disrepair	47

Source: Lichfield Joint Record Office, B/V/1/63

Total number of parishes recorded: 61

\* My own pagination.

+ The 1620 visitation book is divided into two sections, with  
seperate pagination.

## Key to Abbreviations used in Footnotes

### 1) Record Offices

B.C.R.O.	Birmingham Central Reference Library
C.C.R.O.	Coventry City Record Office
E.S.R.O.	East Sussex Record Office
H.W.C.R.O.	Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, Worcester
L.J.R.O.	Lichfield Joint Record Office
P.R.O.	Public Record Office, Chancery Lane
S.B.T.	Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon
S.C.R.O.	Staffordshire County Record Office
W.C.R.O.	Warwick County Record Office

### 2) Publications

<u>D.N.B.</u>	<u>Dictionary of National Biography</u>
<u>C.S.P.D.</u>	<u>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</u>
<u>V.C.H.</u>	<u>Victoria County History of Warwickshire</u>

All books cited were published in London, unless otherwise indicated.

## Footnotes

### Introduction

- 1 John Burges, A Sermon Preached Before the late King James (1642), p. 13. The sermon was preached in 1604.
- 2 Thomas Spencer, "The Genealogie, Life and Death of the Right Honourable Robert Lord Brooke", in Miscellany One, Publications of the Dugdale Society (Warwick 1977), p. 191.
- 3 William Dugdale, A Short View of the Late Troubles in England (Oxford 1681), p. 37.
- 4 John Morrill, "What was the English Revolution?", in History Today, March 1984, p. 15.
- 5 Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, "After Revisionism", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642 (1989), p. 39.
- 6 Robert Ashton, The English Civil War, 1603-1642 (1978), p. 110.
- 7 Patrick Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford 1982), p. 90.

- 8 Peter White, "The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered", in Past and Present, 101 (Nov. 1983), p. 50.
- 9 Kevin Sharpe, "Archbishop Laud", in History Today, August 1983, pp. 26-30; G. W. Bernard, "The Church of England, 1529-1642", in History, June 1990, pp. 183-206.
- 10 Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution", in Conrad Russell, ed., The Origins of the English Civil War (1973), pp. 119-143.
- 11 Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, 1590-1640 (Oxford 1987).
- 12 Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution", in Russell, ed., Origins of the English Civil War, pp. 119-129.
- 13 Conrad Russell, The Causes of the English Civil War (1990), Chapter Five.
- 14 Patrick Collinson, The Birthpangs of Protestant England (1988), pp. 140-141.
- 15 Peter White, "The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered", in Past and Present, 101 (Nov. 1983), pp. 49-50.
- 16 Kevin Sharpe, "Archbishop Laud", in History Today, August 1983, p. 27.

- 17 G. W. Bernard, "The Church of England, 1529-1642", in History, June 1990, p. 196.
- 18 Julian Davies, "The Growth and Implementation of 'Laudianism', with Special Reference to the Southern Province", unpublished D.Phil thesis, Jesus College, Oxford, 1987.
- 19 Bernard, "The Church of England, 1529-1642", pp. 202-204.
- 20 P. G. Lake, "Calvinism and the English Church, 1570-1635", in Past and Present, 114 (Feb. 1987), p. 73.
- 21 Andrew Foster, "Church Policies of the 1630s", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England (1989), pp. 194-195.
- 22 For a general assessment of the episcopal appointments of James I, see P. Lake and K. Fincham, "The Ecclesiastical Policy of King James I", in Journal of British Studies, April 1985, pp. 169-207.
- 24 For Overall's Arminianism, see Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists (1987), pp. 35-38.
- 23 Neile's career as Archbishop of York is examined by Andrew Foster in "Church Policies of the 1630s", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England, pp. 193-217.

- 25 The policies of Bishop Morton are examined in Chapter Two.
- 26 The only contemporary account of Bishop Parry was written by Anthony Wood. Wood states that Parry was respected for his knowledge of the Church Fathers, and was "so eloquent a preacher that King James always professed he seldom heard a better". Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, ed. J. Bliss (Oxford 1815), p. 192.
- 27 The policies of Bishop Thornborough are examined in Chapter Two.
- 28 The willingness of Bishop Wright to dilute Laudian policies was exemplified in his dealings with Coventry. In 1637 he ruled that the communion table in the parish church of St Michael's could be taken from the chancel into the nave for the administration of the eucharist. Wright's policies are assessed in Chapter Three, and his treatment of Coventry is described in detail in Chapter Seven.
- 29 In 1636 Wright was rebuked by Archbishop Laud for his failure to submit annual reports on the condition of his diocese. Laud, Works, eds. W. Scott and J. Bliss (Oxford 1847-60), vii, p. 413.
- 30 The dispute between Thornborough and Potter is described in Chapter Two.



- 31 Bishop Thornborough ordered the erection of altar-rails in the Warwickshire parishes of Barcheston and St Nicholas' in Warwick. Warwick County Record Office, churchwardens' accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, p. 34, St Nicholas', Warwick, DR87/2, p. 114.
- 32 The activity and influence of the Puritan clergy in Warwickshire are assessed in Chapter Three.
- 33 Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), pp. 39-43.
- 34 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 92, Offchurch, N4/18 p. 86, Southam, DR50/9, p. 192.
- 35 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 126, St Nicholas', Warwick, DR87/2, p. 111, Welford-upon-Avon, DR911/7, f. 1.
- 36 W.C.R.O., DR50/9, p. 116.
- 37 W.C.R.O., DR87/2, pp. 52, 149.
- 38 The relationship between national and regional issues in the period 1640-1642 is examined in Chapter Nine.
- 39 The role of religion in determining the allegiance of active parliamentarians and royalists in Warwickshire is examined in Chapter Nine.

40 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, ed. W. Macray (1888), i, p. 309.

41 See Chapter Nine.

## Chapter One

1 Robert Harris, A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons (1642), Dedication, p. 2.

2 Warwick County Record Office, corporation minute book, 1610-1662, CR1618/W21/6, pp. 103, 118-119.

3 Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, council book, 1628-1657, BRU2/3, pp.166, 167, 175. The dispute about the appointment of a minister in Stratford between 1638 and 1640 is discussed in Chapter Eight.

4 Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, 1555-1640, A14a, f. 173v; W.C.R.O., CR1618/W21/6, p. 13; S.B.T., council book, 1593-1628, BRU2/2, pp. 387, 396, 422, 450. The lectureships at Coventry and Stratford are examined in Chapters Seven and Eight respectively.

- 5 Birmingham Central Reference Library, miscellaneous correspondence, MS 1098/112, copy of a letter from Hester Jennens to her brother, 1625.
- 6 The lectureship at Nuneaton was described by Thomas Jacombe in Enochs Walk and Change (1656), p. 37. It was also mentioned by Samuel Clarke in his biography of Richard Vines in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 48.
- 7 W.C.R.O., CR1618/W21/6, p. 111; Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1633-4, p. 243. For the dispute between Clarke and Hall, see Chapter Three, section four; for Spencer, see Chapter Three, section two.
- 8 The six peculiar parishes were Edgebaston, Ichington, Stratford, Tachbrooke, Ufton and Wolvey.
- 9 See Appendices I and II. Lichfield Joint Record Office, episcopal visitation book, 1617, B/V/1/35, episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, episcopal visitation book, 1636, B/V/1/58, episcopal visitation book, 1639, B/V/1/63.
- 10 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' papers, Welford-upon-Avon, DR911/6, f. 1, ff. 2, 9.
- 11 See Appendix II.

- 12 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, Berkswell, DR613/74, Holy Trinity in Coventry, DR581/46, Fillongley, DR404/49, Kenilworth, DR296/6, Kineton, DR212/30, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, Offchurch, N4/18, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, DR11/10, Shipstone, DR446/21, Southam, DR50/9, Welford-upon-Avon, DR911/6, Nether-Whitacre, DRB27/5, Warwick, St Nicholas', DR87/1-2.
- 13 The parishes were St Michael's and Holy Trinity in Coventry, Fillongley, Kenilworth, Solihull, Stratford, Tamworth and St Nicholas' in Coventry. C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 342r (Coventry); W.C.R.O., DR404/48, p. 100 (Fillongley), DR296/6, p. 80 (Kenilworth), Solihull town book, DRB64/63, p. 126, DR87/2, p. 47 (Warwick); S.B.T., volume of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/13, f. 103, ff. 7v (Stratford); British Library, collection for a history of Tamworth, Additional MS 28175, p. 108.
- 14 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1630-1640.
- 15 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35; Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 2760/802, fos. 32v-44v, 97r-101v.
- 16 Between 1614 and 1620, 143 Warwickshire parishes presented at least one person to the episcopal visitations of Lichfield or Worcester. This represented 68% of the parishes in the county. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, B/V/1/40; Worcester Record Office, 2760/802, fos. 32v-46r, 97r-110r.

- 17 See Martin Ingram, The Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1603-1642 (Cambridge 1987), pp. 323-329. Ingram has challenged Christopher Hill's argument that the ecclesiastical courts were largely ineffective at regulating social behaviour.
- 18 H.W.C.R, 2760/802, f. 85r.
- 19 The minister of Weddington between 1627 and 1644 was Richard Vines, a Puritan preacher well-known throughout the region. Vines was a committed parliamentarian at the outbreak of the civil war, and became a member of the Assembly of Divines in 1643.
- 20 The Puritan movement in Stratford is examined in Chapter Eight.
- 21 Wright's comment was quoted by Archbishop Laud in his annual account of the province of Canterbury in 1633. This was appended to Laud's History of the Troubles and Tryal of Archbishop William Laud (1695), p. 527.
- 22 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, second half of volume, fos. 8v (Sowe), 13r (Leamington Hastings).
- 23 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1632, Leamington Hastings.
- 24 A. G. Matthews, Walker Revised (1948), p. 365.

- 25 In 1642 Dale was taken from his living by parliamentary soldiers and "led ridiculously" through the streets of Coventry. SP16/491/138.
- 26 According to the articles against him, Warde was first presented to Bishop Morton for drunkenness in 1626. He promised to amend his behaviour, but continued to frequent alehouses "in as usuall and scandallous manner as before". Public Record Office, SP16/393/93.
- 27 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1614, B/V/1/29, p. 9 (my own pagination), episcopal visitation book, 1617, B/V/1/35, p. 2 (my own pagination).
- 28 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1628, Arley.
- 29 The ministers presented for nonconformity were Samuel Clarke, John Gilpin, Thomas Hall, Ephraim Huitt, Simon Moore, John Smith and Thomas Wilson. Wilson died in 1638, and Huitt emigrated to New England in 1639. Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Eminent Persons, p. 7; L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 21 (Gilpin); B.C.R.L., "A Briefe Narrative of the Life and Death of Thomas Hall, Late Pastor of Kings-Norton", LF78.1 HAL/467148, p. 47; Laud, Troubles and Tryal, p. 554 (Huitt); Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxix (Moore and Smith); P.R.O., High Commission act book, SP16/324, f. 19 (Wilson).

- 30 William Cooke was instituted as vicar of Wroxhall in 1641. In 1662 he was ejected from a living in Chester under the Act of Uniformity. A. G. Matthews, Calamy Revised (2nd ed. Oxford 1988), p. 132.
- 31 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xl.
- 32 P.R.O., High Commission act books, SP16/261, f. 295b, SP16/342, f. 19. The case against Wilson is described in Chapter Eight.
- 33 P.R.O., articles against William Pinson and John Rogers, 1637, SP16/370/91, articles against Thomas Robinson, 1638, SP16/388/41.
- 34 The methods of tithing in seventeenth-century Warwickshire are described in D. M. Barratt, ed., Ecclesiastical Terriers of Warwickshire (1955), 1, Introduction.
- 35 Barratt, Ecclesiastical Terriers, 1, pp. xix-xxx.
- 36 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 29.
- 37 W.C.R.O., CR1618/W21/6, pp. 100-101.
- 38 W.C.R.O., CR1618/W21/6, pp. 115-117.
- 39 C.R.O., A14a, pp.365r.

- 40 S.B.T., BRU2/3, pp. 14, 56, 90, 96. The dispute between Stratford corporation and Wilson is described in Chapter Eight.
- 41 The parishes were Brinklow, Burton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry, Sutton Coldfield, Fenny-Bentley, Kingsbury, Leamington-Hastings, Mancetter, Polesworth, Ryton-upon-Dunsmore, Stivichall and Withybrooke. L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1615-1636.
- 42 Barratt, Ecclesiastical Terriers, i, pp. xliv-xlv.
- 43 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 29.
- 44 The answers to Bishop's Freke's articles are reproduced in Barratt, Ecclesiastical Terriers.
- 45 Of the 71 ministers who obtained Warwickshire benefices in the diocese of Worcester between 1620 and 1640, 45 had attended Oxford or Cambridge. William Dugdale, History and Antiquities of Warwickshire, ed. W. Thomas (1730); Joseph Foster, Alumni Oxonienses (1891), Venn and Venn, Alumni Cantabrigienses (1922).
- 46 See Rosemary O'Day, "The Reformation of the Ministry, 1558-1642", in Rosemary O'Day and Felicity Heal (editors), Continuity and Change: Personnel and Administration of the Church of England, 1500-1642 (1976).
- 47 The six parishes were Berkswell, Holy Trinity in Coventry, Kenilworth, Kineton, Kingsbury and St Nicholas' in Warwick.



- W.C.R.O., DR613/74, f. 16r (Berkswell), DR801/13, 1614 (Coventry), DR296/6, pp. 12, 16, 26, 41 (Kenilworth), DR212/30, p. 5 (Kineton), DB(B)3/39, pp. 20, 102 (Kingsbury), DR87/1, 1613 (Warwick).
- 48 W.C.R.O., DR87/1, 1613. The role of travelling preachers in the Church of England is discussed by Patrick Collinson in The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford 1982), pp. 257-259.
- 49 Samuel Holyoake, A Sermon of Obedience. Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall (1610), p. 12.
- 50 John Trapp, Theologia Theologiae, The True Treasure (1641), p.248.
- 51 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, pp. 5 (Dasset Prior), 6 (Harbury), B/V/1/35, pp. 3 (Aston), 4 (Bulkington), B/V/1/40, second half of volume, fos. 8v (Sowe), 13r (Leamington Hastings), B/V/1/56, pp. 10 (Baddesley-Clinton), 19 (Knowle), B/V/1/63 pp 19 (Witacre), 23 (Leamington), 23 (Maxstock), 29 (Allesley), 32 (Bilton), 37 (Braneton), 42 (Hardwick-Priors).
- 52 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1615, Brownsover, B/C/5/1616, Lillington, B/C/5/1616, Withybrooke, B/C/5/1626, Cubbington, B/C/5/1629, Hampton-in-Arden, B/C/5/1632, Leamington-Hastings.

- 53 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1615, Brownsover, B/C/5/1629, Hampton-in-Arden,  
B/C/5/1632, Leamington-Hastings.
- 54 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1632, Leamington-Hastings.
- 55 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1626, Cubbington.
- 56 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1616, Lillington, B/C/5/1616, Withybrooke; P.R.O.,  
articles against William Warde, 1638, SP16/393/93.
- 57 P.R.O., SP16/393/93, p. 4.
- 58 Dugdale made this comment in the introduction to his transcript  
of Shustocke parish register in 1679. W.C.R.O., DR(B)39/2, pp.  
14-15.
- 59 See Appendix II.
- 60 The levy at *Welford-upon-Avon* was recorded in a memorandum in  
the register of baptisms. DR892/1, p. 97.
- 61 W.C.R.O., churchwardens accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, p. 31,  
Southam, DR50/9, pp. 83, 156.
- 62 W.C.R.O., register of baptisms, Wolvey, DR645/1, p. 9.
- 63 W.C.R.O., DR5/6, p. 31.

- 64 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 14 (Shustocke), B/V/1/35, pp. 5 (Bilton), 7 (Berkswell), 14 (Curdsworth), 16 (Harborough), 17 (Grendon), 26 (Packington), 28 (Radford), 29 (Solihull), 30 (Stockton), B/V/1/40, second half of volume, fos. 3r (Arley), 19r (Wishaw), 16r (Radway), B/V/1/56, pp. 10 (Baddesley-Clinton), 32 (Sutton-Coldfield), 50 (Churchover), 87 (Whitacre Inferior), 88 (Whitacre Superior), 94 (Ichington), 111-112 (Ladbrooke), 120, B/V/1/63, pp. 24 (Maxstock), 37 (Braneton).
- 65 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 14.
- 66 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, p. 30.
- 67 Bishop Overall's visitation is discussed in Chapter Two.

## Chapter Two

- 1 John Burges, An Answer Rejoynd To That Much Applauded Pamphlet of a Namelesse Author, bearing this Title: A Reply to Dr Mortons General Defence of three Innocent Ceremonies (1631), Preface, p. 13.
- 2 This report is taken from the annual accounts of the province of Canterbury, appended to Laud's History of the Troubles and Tryal of Archbishop William Laud (1695), pp. 554, 557. The Puritan minister was Ephraim Huitt, the rector of Wroxall.

- 3 Neile's career as Archbishop of York is examined by Andrew Foster in his essay "Church Policies of the 1630s", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England (1989), pp. 193-217.
- 4 See Hugh Trevor-Roper, Archbishop Laud (1940), pp. 105, 184.
- 5 See Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists (1987), pp. 35-38.
- 6 Thomas Fuller, Worthies of England (1662), Suffolk, p. 61.
- 7 Lichfield Joint Record Office, episcopal visitation book, 1614, B/V/1/29, pp. 6, 7, 14 (my own pagination). See Appendix I for details.
- 8 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1617, B/V/1/35, p. 2 (my own pagination). See Appendix I for details.
- 9 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, pp. 5, 7, 14, 16, 17, 18, 26, 29, 32. The parishes were Bilton, Berkswell, Curdsworth, Harborough, Fillongley, Grandborough, Grendon, Packington, Solihull and Stockton.
- 10 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 14. The parish concerned was Shustocke.
- 11 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, second half of volume, fos. 19r, 16r. The parishes concerned were Radway and Wishaw.

- 12 See Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists, pp. 170-177.
- 13 Opinions of Certaine Reverend Divines concerning the Fundamental Points of the True Protestant Religion (1642), Thomas Morton, p. 17.
- 14 Public Record Office, alterations to Bishop Morton's sermon, 1639, SP/16/437/56.
- 15 Thomas Morton, A Sermon Preached Before the Kings most Excellent Majestie (1639), p. 3.
- 16 The meeting between Morton and the nonconformist clergy of the diocese of Chester was described by Richard Baddiley in The Life and Death of Thomas, Lord Bishop of Duresme (1669), pp. 78-79.
- 17 Morton expressed his opinion on the lawfulness of Anglican ceremonies most fully in A Defence of the Innocencie of the Three Ceremonies of the Church of England (1609).
- 18 P.R.O., letter for Bishop Morton to Secretary Windebank, 1639, SP/16/142/58.
- 19 *Ibid.*

- 20 P.R.O., letter from Bishop Morton to Samuel Buggs, 1632, SP/16/218/77. The controversy surrounding the appointment of a lecturer in Coventry is described in Chapter Eight.
- 21 See Chapter Three for details.
- 22 See Trevor-Roper, Archbishop Laud, pp. 105, 184.
- 23 Julian Davies, "The Growth and Implementation of Laudianism, with Special reference to the Southern Province", unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Jesus College, Oxford, 1987, p. 243.
- 24 Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), p. 86.
- 25 Articles to be Ministred, Enquired of, and Answered in the First Visitation of Robert, Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1633), "Of Devine Service and Administration of the Sacraments", Article 7. See section three for details.
- 26 See below, pp. 13-14.
- 27 Anthony Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, ed. J. Bliss (1815), iv, p. 801.
- 28 William Laud, Works, eds. W. Scott and J. Bliss (1847-60), vii, p. 413.

- 29   Laud, History, p. 557.
- 30   P.R.O., order from Charles Twysden to the churchwardens of Coventry, 1636, SP16/330/40.
- 31   P.R.O., letter from Thomas Byrd to Edward Latham, 1637, SP16/350/52, letter from Edward Latham to Sir John Lambe, 1637, SP16/351/18. The dispute about the placing of the communion table in St Michael's church is described in Chapter Seven.
- 32   The lectureships in Warwickshire are described in Chapter Three. Also see Chapter Seven for the lectureships in Coventry.
- 33   The popularity of Vines' lectures at Nuneaton was described by Thomas Jacombe in Enochs Walk and Change (1656), p.37. It was also mentioned by Samuel Clarke in his biography of Vines in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p.48.
- 34   Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, 1555-1640, f. 307r. Tristram Diamond's preaching in Coventry was recorded in the diary of Robert Woodford: New College, Oxford, MS 9502, p. 267 (my own pagination).
- 35   Francis Holyoake, A Sermon of Obedience. Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall (1610), Introduction.
- 36   C.C.R.O., city annals, A48, f. 35v.

- 37 Dictionary of National Biography, ii, pp. 1341-1342.
- 38 Ralph Brownrigg, Sixty-Five Sermons (1674), ii, p. 296.
- 39 The fast sermon by Ralph Brownrigg was mentioned in a letter from Edmund Rossington to Viscount Conway in 1640. P.R.O., SP/16/451/66.
- 40 Fuller, Worthies, Suffolk, p. 62.
- 41 John Thornborough, The Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ (1630), pp. 13-14.
- 42 *Ibid*, p. 19.
- 43 P.R.O., letter from Bishop Thornborough to Archbishop Laud, 1637, SP/16/343/77.
- 44 P.R.O., letter from Simon Potter to Archbishop Laud, 1637, SP/16/344/107.
- 45 Laud, History, p. 552.
- 46 The lectureship at Stratford is examined in Chapter Nine.
- 47 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 78-79.



- 48 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 6.
- 49 P.R.O., letter from Bishop Thornborough to Archbishop Laud, 1636, SP/16/319/71.
- 50 P.R.O., High Commission act book, SP/16/324, f. 19.
- 51 The circumstances surrounding Ephraim Huitt's emigration were described in the Introduction to his book The Whole Prophecy of Daniel Explained (1643). Huitt's case is described in Chapter Three.
- 52 12 parishes presented people for incontinence or fornication in 1614, 13 in 1617, 21 in 1620, 24 in 1635 and 12 in 1639. Expressed as a percentage of the total number of parishes recorded in each visitation, 18% presented people for these offences in 1614, 17% in 1617, 20% in 1620, 22% in 1635 and 20% in 1639. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, B/V/1/35, B/V/1/40, B/V/1/56, B/V/1/63.
- 53 See below, p. 14.
- 54 Warwick County Record Office, churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 80, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 138, Offchurch, N4/18, p.115.

- 55 Articles to be Enquired of Within the Diocesse of Coventry and Lichfield (1629), Article 36.
- 56 Articles to be Ministred, Enquired of, and Answered in the First Visitation of Robert, Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1633), "Of Devine Service and Administration of the Sacraments", Article 7.
- 57 *Ibid*, Articles 25 and 45.
- 58 Staffordshire Record Office, parish register, Wombourne, D3710/1/1, p. 22 (my own pagination).
- 59 William Salt Library, Stafford, churchwardens' accounts, Seighford, M600, p. 40; S.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Bradeley, D9/A/PC/1, p. 43.
- 60 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/46, pp. 157, 186 (my own pagination).
- 61 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Southam, DR50/9, p. 191.
- 62 The career of Francis Holyoake is examined in Chapter Four.
- 63 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Fillongley, DR404/48, p. 14, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 79, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 115 (my own pagination), Ryton-upon-Dunsmore, DR11/10, p. 69, Nether-Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 14.

- 64 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1636, B/V/1/58, f. 49v.
- 65 P.R.O., directions to the churchwardens of Coventry, 1637, SP16/330/40.
- 66 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 166, Nether-Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 23.
- 67 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxix.
- 68 Five parishes presented people for gadding in the visitations of 1635-1639, compared to only one in the visitations of 1614-1620. See Appendix I for details.
- 69 Gloucester Record Office, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, G.D.R. 189, fos. 17r-17v.
- 70 See Appendix II.
- 71 See Appendix II.
- 72 L.J.R.O., metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, p. 61 (my own pagination).
- 73 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1639, B/V/1/63, pp. 8, 18, 26, 42, 42 (my own pagination). See Appendix II.
- 74 See Footnote 9.

- 75 See Footnote 10.
- 76 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 1, 10, 32, 38, 50, 52, 87, 94, 111-112, 120.  
The parishes were Allestery, Baddesley Clinton, Sutton Coldfield, Shustocke, Churchover, Leamington Hastings, Whitacre Inferior, Ichington, Ladbroke and Stockton.
- 77 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 24, 32, 34, 37. The parishes were Maxstocke, Bilton, Churchover and Braneton.
- 78 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 16. The parish was Whitacre Inferior.
- 79 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/40, second half of volume, fos. 1r, 4r, 6v, 16r.
- 80 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 28, 29, 44, 49, 81, 93, 98, 112, 118, 126.  
The parishes were Sheldon, Shottington, Brinklow, Bedworth, Hardwick-Priors, Wolston, Ichington, Ladbroke, Riton, Leamington-Hastings.
- 81 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 12, 40, 41, 45. The parishes were Kingsbury, Foleshill, Harborough and Ladbroke.
- 82 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, p. 45.
- 83 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1621, Riton, Wolvey, B/C/5/1623, Kingsbury, B/C/5/1627, Stoneleigh.

- 84 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1631, Leamington-Hastings, B/C/5/1633, Burton, Brinklow, Fenny Bentley, Withybrooke; B/C/5/1634, Mancetter, B/C/5/1635, Stivichall, B/C/5/1636, Coventry.
- 85 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 1, 5, 7, 10, 11, 50, 67, 77, 78, 79, 80, 86, 94, 100, 122.
- 86 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, *passim*.
- 87 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 11, 23, 27, 32, 34, 37, 43.
- 88 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, pp. 6, 7, 14. See Appendix I.
- 89 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, p. 2. See Appendix I.
- 90 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1615, Wishaw, B/C/5/1617, Burton-Hastings, B/C/5/1618, Foleshill. See Appendix I.
- 91 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 5, 10, 16, 21, 51, 53, 62, 90, 116. See Appendix I.
- 92 C.S.P.D, 1635, Preface; p. xxxix.
- 93 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, fos. 29v, 31v, 36r, 40v. See Appendix I.
- 94 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 32, 34, 36, 41. See Appendix I.

- 95 P.R.O., articles against Thomas Robinson, SP/16/370/91, articles against William Pinson and John Rogers, SP/16/388/41. See Appendix I.
- 96 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 53, 62-3. The incidents at Sowe and Leamington-Hastings are described in Chapter Six.
- 97 See Appendix I.
- 98 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, pp. 1, 12, 13. The parishes were Dunchurch, Hillmorton, Hampton-in-Arden and Polesworth.
- 99 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, pp. 5, 8, 11, 15, 21, 30. The parishes were Birdingbury, Berkswell, Corley, Dasset, Kenilworth and Southam.
- 100 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 125. The parish was Leamington-Hastings.
- 101 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 27, 28, 34-5, 46, 84, 101, 115, 117. The parishes were Solihull, Sheldon, Mancetter, Binley, Packwood, Illington, Maxton and Rugby.
- 102 Quarter Sessions Book of Indictments, 1632-1642, Warwickshire County Records, vi (Warwick 1941), pp. 22, 23, 30, 53, 56, 58, 59.
- 103 See Footnote 85.

- 104 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 14, 38, 100; B/V/1/63, pp. 8, 18, 35. See Appendix II.
- 105 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 86, B/V/1/63, p. 19.
- 106 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 112, B/V/1/63, p. 45.
- 107 W.C.R.O., vestry book, Fillongley, DR404/48, p. 78, churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, pp. 15-39, Southam, DR50/9, pp. 74-84, Welford-upon-Avon, DR911/6, f. 1.
- 108 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, pp. 75-76, 84, 88, 102.
- 109 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Southam, DR50/9, p. 212.
- 110 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, p. 26.
- 111 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 115, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 93, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/2, p. 114.
- 112 W.C.R.O., DR87/2, p. 89.
- 113 W.C.R.O., DR50/9, p. 205.
- 114 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Fillongley, DR404/49, pp. 14-14b, Nether Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 14.

- 115 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/2,  
p. 89, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 88, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 143.
- 116 W.C.R.O., DR50/9, p. 156.
- 117 W.C.R.O., DR404/48, p. 97.
- 118 W.C.R.O., DR5/6, pp. 27, 31, 33, 35, 44.
- 119 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/1,  
1617.
- 120 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Welford-upon-Avon, DR911/6, f.  
1, ff. 8.
- 121 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Berkswell, DR613/74, f. 27r,  
Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 71.
- 122 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Fillongley, DR404/49, p. 16,  
Kenilworth, DR296/6, pp. 50, 79, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, pp. 20,  
140, Offchurch, N4/18, p. 87, Southam, DR50/9, pp. 29, 187.
- 123 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Foleshill, DR223/38, p. 20b,  
Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 76, Ryton, DR11/10, p. 87, Southam,  
DR50/9, p. 197.
- 124 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Offchurch, N4/18, p. 89.



- 125 W.C.R.O., DR87/2, p. 137.
- 126 W.C.R.O., DR50/9, p. 187.
- 127 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Coventry, Holy Trinity, DR581/46, p. 185, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 79, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 140, Offchurch, N4/18, p. 82.
- 128 W.C.R.O., DR(B)3/39, p. 71, 102.
- 129 W.C.R.O., Leek-Wootton parish register, DR38/1, p. 53. See Chapter Five for details of Lady Alice's donations to local churches.
- 130 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Shipstone-upon-Stour, DR446/21, p. 77.
- 131 The parishes were Ashow, Holy Trinity in Coventry, Kenilworth, Kingsbury, Leek-Wootton, Monks-Kirby, Offchurch, Shipstone, Southam and Stoneleigh. This list includes parishes which recorded the acquisition of new plate in their accounts and parishes which received plate from Lady Alice Dudley in 1638.
- 132 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, p. 22, Kenilworth, DR296/6, pp. 71, Kineton, DR212/30, p. 5, Nether-Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 7.

- 133 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Ryton, DR11/10, p. 73, Southam, DR50/9, p. 181, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/2, p. 103.
- 134 W.C.R.O., DR(B)3/39, p. 115.
- 135 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 51, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 115, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/2, p. 114.
- 136 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Coventry, Holy Trinity, M1/302, fos. 37, 58.
- 137 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Barcheston, DR5/6, p. 34, Fillongley, DR404/49, p. 14, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 79, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 115, Ryton, DR11/10, p. 69, Southam, DR50/9, p. 191, Nether Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 14, Coventry, Holy Trinity, M1/302, f. 37, Warwick, St Nicholas, DR87/2, p. 114.
- 138 W.C.R.O., DR5/6, p. 45.
- 139 W.C.R.O., DR50/9, pp. 182, 218.
- 140 The career of Francis Holyoake is examined in Chapter Four.
- 141 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, f. 49v.
- 142 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Fillongley, DR404/49, p. 14, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 79, Nether Whitacre, DRB27/5, p. 14.

- 143 W.C.R.O., DR87/2, p. 114.
- 144 W.C.R.O., DR(B)3/39, p. 116.
- 145 W.C.R.O., vestry order book, Coventry, Holy Trinity, DR581/64, fos. 70v, 71r.
- 146 East Sussex Record Office, letter from Anna Temple to her daughter, 1642, Dunn MS 51/54.
- 147 The ministers were Samuel Clarke of Alcester, John Gilpin of Knowle, Thomas Hall of Kings Norton and Simon Moore of Frankton.
- 148 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 78-79.
- 149 The availability of sermons in Coventry during the 1630s is discussed in Chapter Seven.
- 150 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 78-79; Birmingham Central Reference Library, "A Briefe Narrative of the Life and Death of Mr Thomas Hall, Late Pastor of Kings-Norton", LF78.1/HAL/467148, pp. 46-7; Jacombe, Enochs Walk, p.37; Clarke, Eminent Persons, p.48. The survival of the town lectureships during the 1630s is examined in Chapter Three.

### Chapter Three

- 1 Samuel Clarke, The Saints Nose-Gay, or a Posie of 741 Spirituall Flowers (1642), p. 146.
- 2 The contemporary use of the word "Puritan" is discussed by Christopher Hill in Society and Puritanism (2nd ed. 1985). The use of the word by historians has been defended by Patrick Collinson in "A Comment concerning the name Puritan", in Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 31 (1990).
- 3 Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 1613-1618, 2760/802, f. 23r.
- 4 Warwick County Record Office, Newdigate journal, 1631, CR136/A7, p. 56 (my own pagination). The preacher was Josiah Packwood.
- 5 John Bryan, A Discovery of the Probable Sin Causing this Great Judgement of Rain and Waters (1647), p. 10.
- 6 Burges expressed his opinions on the lawfulness of Anglican ceremonies in An Answer Rejoynded (1631) and The Lawfulnesse of Kneeling (1635). For Burges' career, see Dictionary of National Biography, iv.
- 7 Humphrey Fenn, Preface to the Last Will and Testament (1642), p. 3.

- 8 Newdigate's career and religious beliefs are examined in Chapter Six. See also Vivienne Larminie, "The Lifestyle and Attitudes of the Seventeenth-Century Gentleman, with Special Reference to the Newdigates of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980, Chapter Eight.
- 9 See Larminie, "Newdigates", Appendix IX. The preachers regularly heard by Newdigate in Warwickshire included known nonconformists such as Josiah Packwood and Samuel Clarke. Many others, such as Richard Vines, were active supporters of parliament during the civil war.
- 10 W.C.R.O., Newdigate journal, 1630, CR136/A14, p. 53 (my own pagination).
- 11 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 306.
- 12 W.C.R.O., "MSS of the first Sir R.N.", 1626, M1/351/5/21, p. 489.
- 13 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 453.
- 14 W.C.R.O., Newdigate journal, CR136/A16a, p. 11.
- 15 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 391.
- 16 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 398.
- 17 W.C.R.O., CR136/A7, pp. 53, 56.

- 18 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 419.
- 19 For example, see W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, pp. 24, 41, 114-116, 460-470.
- 20 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 308.
- 21 See Clarke, Saints Nose-Gay, p. 45.
- 22 The reasons for opposing May Games and wakes were expounded most comprehensively by Thomas Hall, the minister of Kings Norton, in Fuebria Florae, The Downfall of May-Games (1661).
- 23 For Puritan attitudes towards Catholicism, see Robin Clifton, "Fear of Popery", in C. Russell, ed., The Origins of the English Civil War (1973), pp. 144-167. Also Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642 (1989), pp. 72-97.
- 24 For example, see W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, pp. 218, 240.
- 25 W.C.R.O., CR136/A7, p. 51.
- 26 Richard Parre, the rector of Ladbroke and future Bishop of Sodor and Man, speculated effusively on the Last Judgment in The End of the Perfect Man (1628) p. 14. For a general account

of apocalyptic ideas in early Stuart England, see P. Christianson, Reformers and Babylon (Toronto 1978).

- 27 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, pp. 482-485.
- 28 Ephraim Huitt, The Whole Prophecy of Daniel Explained (1643), p. 325.
- 29 John Burges, An Answer Rejoyned, Preface, p. 5.
- 30 Huitt, Whole Prophecy, p. 226.
- 31 Clarke, Saints Nose-Gay, pp. 45, 147.
- 32 Samuel Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse, both for Saints and Sinners (1646), p. 27.
- 33 Robert Harris, The Way to True Happinesse. Delivered in Twenty Four Sermons upon the Beautitudes, in The Works of Robert Harris (1654), p. 279. These sermons were originally published in 1631.
- 34 Harris, Way to True Happinesse, p. 280.
- 35 John Burges, An Answer Rejoyned, Preface, p. 7.
- 36 See Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (2nd edition, 1990), p. 327.

- 37 The importance of lectureships to the Puritan clergy is discussed by Patrick Collinson in The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1624 (Oxford 1982), pp. 136-140, 172-177. See also Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism, Chapter Three.
- 38 Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, A14b, f. 173v.
- 39 C.C.R.O., city annals, A48, p. 39r. See Chapter Seven for details of the Coventry lectureships.
- 40 New College, Oxford, diary of Robert Woodford, MS 9502, p. 267 (my own pagination).
- 41 W.C.R.O., CR1618/W12/6, p. 13.
- 42 For Spencer, see Miscellany One, Publications of the Dugdale Society, p. 164; for Clarke, W.C.R.O., council minute book, CR1618/W12/6, p. 107.
- 43 Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, BRU2/2, p. 224. See Chapter Eight for details of the Stratford lectureships.
- 44 Thornborough's comment was recorded by Archbishop Laud in the annual account of the province of Canterbury in 1637. This was appended to Laud's History of the Troubles and Tryal of Archbishop William Laud (1695), p. 552.



- 45 Birmingham Central Reference Library, MS 1098/112, letter from Hester Jennens to her brother, 1625.
- 46 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, pp. 234, 242, 280, 293, 298, 304.
- 47 Richard Vines' lectureship at Nuneaton was described by Thomas Jacombe in his sermon at the minister's funeral, Enoch's Walk and Change (1656), p. 37. It was also mentioned by Samuel Clarke in his biography of Vines in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 48.
- 48 B.C.R.L., "A Briefe Narrative of the Life and Death of Thomas Hall, Late Pastor of Kings-Norton", LF78.1 HAL/467148, pp. 17-19.
- 49 See Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire (1987), pp. 77-79.
- 50 Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 72.
- 51 Clarke, Eminent Persons, p.48.
- 52 B.C.R.L., LF78.1 HAL/467148, p. 46.
- 53 Clarke, Eminent Persons, p.48.
- 54 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, St Nicholas', Warwick, DR87/1, 1613.

- 55 Dugard's diary is analysed by Ann Hughes in her article, "Thomas Dugard and his Circle in the 1630s", in Historical Journal, 29 (1986). Hughes also examines the diary in Warwickshire, pp. 71-79.
- 56 W.C.R.O., diary of Thomas Dugard, M1/290, f. 99r. Simon Moore was suspended by Brent in 1635 for administering the communion to people seated. John Bryan and William Overton were ejected under the Act of Uniformity in 1662. For Samuel Clarke, see section four.
- 57 W.C.R.O., M1/290, f. 99r.
- 58 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, pp. 12, 15, 26, 41.
- 59 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Berkswell, DR613/74, f. 16r, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, p. 20, Kineton, DR212/30, p. 6.
- 60 Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 1614-1618, 2760/802, fos. 50r, 13v, 32r.
- 61 Lichfield Joint Record Office, consistory court papers, B/C/5/1618, Foleshill.
- 62 Newdigate heard three different preachers in the parish of Astley in 1626. Between 1626 and 1631 he attended sermons by at least three different ministers at Nuneaton. The most

- regular preachers in these parishes were Francis Bacon, the minister of Astley, and Josiah Packwood, who appears to have held the lectureship at Nuneaton. W.C.R.O. M1/351/5/21, pp. 385, 393, 489 (Astley), 35, 482 (Nuneaton), CR136/A14, p. 134 (Nuneaton).
- 63 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 77-78.
- 64 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 207.
- 65 Lord Brooke was the patron of John Giplin at Knowle and Samuel Clarke at Alcester. Both men were presented for nonconformity during the metropolitan visitation of 1635. L.J.R.O., metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, p. 21 (my own pagination); Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 66 East Sussex Record Office, correspondence of the Temple and Busbridge families, Dunn MS 51, f. 58.
- 67 Samuel Clarke, A Generall Martyrologie (1651), Dedication, pp. 3-5.
- 68 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 75-77.
- 69 John Ley, A Moniter of Mortalitie (1643). For Ley's relationship with the Archers, see pp. 38-39.

- 70 Lord Brooke's circle of preachers at Warwick included Simeon Ashe and John Ball from Straffordshire, and Thomas Hill from Northamptonshire. John Poynter and George Hughes from London were also regular guests at the castle. These ministers were all troubled by the ecclesiastical authorities during the 1630s. See Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 73.
- 71 P.R.O., petition of the Warwickshire clergy, 1606, SP14/12.
- 72 The problem of nonconformity in Jacobean Coventry is examined in Chapter Seven.
- 73 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1617, Burton Hastings.
- 74 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1617, B/V/1/35, p. 2 (my own pagination).
- 75 H.W.C.R.O., 2760/802, fos. 22v (Stratford), 60v, 65r (Haseley), 61r, 64v (Hatton).
- 76 The ministers were Samuel Clarke, John Gilpin, Thomas Hall, Ephraim Huitt, Simon Moore, John Smith and Thomas Wilson. Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Eminent Persons, p. 7; L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 21 (Gilpin); B.C.R.L., LF78.1 HAL/467148, p. 47 (Hall); Laud, Troubles and Tryal, p. 554 (Huitt); Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, xxxix (Moore and Smith); P.R.O., High Commission act book, SP16/324/f19 (Wilson).

- 77 Huitt, Whole Prophecy, Dedication, p. 2.
- 78 Edmund Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial (ed. Samuel Palmer, 1775), ii, pp. 173 (Overton), 336 (Packwood), 483 (Bryan), 487 (Diamond), 491 (Burgess).
- 79 The Warwickshire Ministers Testimony (1648), title-page.
- 80 The eight newcomers were Alexander Bean, Nicholas Clarke, Obadiah Grew, John Herring, Luke Milbourne, John Roe, Samuel Ticknor and Anthony Woodhul. Bean, Grew and Clarke replaced the sequestered ministers of Stratford, St Michael's in Coventry, and Southam respectively.
- 81 Three signatories to the Testimony, John Bryan, Alexander Bean and Luke Milburne, were ejected from their livings in 1662. Bean and Milburne arrived in Warwickshire after 1645. Another signatory, Thomas Hall, refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, but died in 1662.
- 82 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1636, B/V/1/58, f. 24r.
- 83 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 221.
- 84 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 573, CR136/A14, p. 76.
- 85 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 71.

- 86 Thomas Spencer, "The Genealogie, Life and Death of the Right Honourable Robert, Lord Brooke", in Miscellany One, Publications of the Dugdale Society, pp. 173-174, 189.
- 87 John Trapp, Theologia Theologiae. The True Treasure (1641), pp. 225, 231.
- 88 Richard Vennour, "Considerations about a Set Form of Lyturgy", appended to Panoplia: Or the Whole Armour of God (1662), pp. 6-7.
- 89 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 74-78.
- 90 John Bryan, The Vertuous Daughter. A Sermon Preached at St Maries in Warwick at the Funerall of Mistresse Cicely Puckering (1636).
- 91 Ephraim Huitt's Whole Prophecy of Daniel was withheld from publication by the "prelaticall party" in the late 1630s. Huitt, Whole Prophecy, Dedication, pp. 1-2.
- 92 The five Puritan ministers who published sermons after 1642 were John Bryan, Anthony Burges, Robert Harris, James Nalton and Richard Vines. Three others, Samuel Clarke, Ephraim Huitt and Thomas Hall, published books in the same period.
- 93 Richard Vines, Calebs Integrity in Following the Lord Fully (1642), p. 31.

- 94 Anthony Burges, The Difficulty of and the Encouragements to a Reformation (1643), p. 28.
- 95 James Nalton, Delay of Reformation Provoking Gods Further Indignation (1646), p. 11.
- 96 Vines, Calebs Integrity, p. 21-22.
- 97 Burges, Difficulty, p. 26.
- 98 Thomas Warmestrey, A Convocation Speech (1641), p. 3.
- 99 Vines, Calebs Integrity, p. 22.
- 100 Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, A Discourse upon the Nature of that Episcopacie which is Exercised in England (1641), p. 59.
- 101 Vines, Calebs Integrity, p. 21-22.
- 102 Burges, Difficulty, p. 21.
- 103 Thomas Hall, Fuebria Florae. The Downfall of May-Games (1661), pp. 13-14.
- 104 B.C.R.L., LF78.1 HAL/467148, p. 19.
- 105 Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.

- 106 P.R.O., SP16/324/f19. The proceedings against Wilson are described in Chapter Eight.
- 107 P.R.O., depositions against Thomas Dugard, 1662, SP29/85/101.
- 108 Huitt, Whole Prophecy, Dedication.
- 109 P.R.O. Privy Council register, 1637, PC2/48, pp. 185, 359, 374, examination of John Maynard, SP16/368. The proceedings against Coventry are described in Chapter Seven.
- 110 Burges, Difficulty, p. 28.
- 111 Bryan, Discovery, p. 10.
- 112 Gloucester Record Office, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, GDR/189, f. 17r.
- 113 Articles to be Ministered, Enquired of and Answered in the Second Visitation of Robert, Lord Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1636), "Of Divine Service and Administration of the Sacraments", Article 46; Third Visitation (1639), "Of Divine Service", Article 45..
- 114 Huitt, Whole Prophecy, Dedication, p. 2.
- 115 The availability of sermons in Coventry during the 1630s is discussed in Chapter Seven.



- 116 Robert Woodford, the steward of Northampton, attended a lecture preached by Diamond in October 1638. New College, Oxford, MS 9502, p. 267 (my own pagination).
- 117 Clarke, Eminent Persons, p. 48
- 118 B.C.R.L., LF78.1 HAL/467148, p. 46.
- 119 See Hughes, Warwickshire, p.79.
- 120 This letter is quoted from Paul Seaver, Wallington's World (1985), p. 98.
- 121 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, xl.
- 122 Clarke, Saints Nose-Gay, pp. 26, 74, 166, 171.
- 123 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, pp. 208-209.
- 124 *Ibid.*, p. 206.
- 125 Samuel Clarke, Medullatheologiae: or the Marrow of Divinity (1659), p. 312.
- 126 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 6.
- 127 *Ibid.* Also Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 73.

- 128 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 129 Calamy, Nonconformists Memorial, ed. Palmer, i, pp. 90-91.
- 130 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 131 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
- 132 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 133 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
- 134 Clarke, Mirroure or Looking Glasse, p. 153.
- 135 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, pp. 7-8.
- 136 *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
- 137 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 138 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 139 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

## Chapter Four

- 1 William Laud, Works, ed. W. Scott and J. Bliss (Oxford 1847-1860), iv, p. 284.
- 2 Nicholas Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution", in Conrad Russell, ed., The Origins of the English Civil War (1973), pp. 119-143; Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, 1590-1640 (Oxford 1987).
- 3 Thomas Hall's ministry in Warwick is described in section three. The ministry of William Panting in Coventry is examined in Chapter Seven.
- 4 Holyoake's definition of *Predestinatiani* is quoted from Tyacke, "Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution", in Russell, ed., Origins of the English Civil War, pp. 137-138.
- 5 Holyoake's ejection by parliamentary soldiers was described in an anonymous pamphlet, A True and Perfect Relation of the First and Victorious Skirmish (1642), Introduction, p. 3. For Holyoake's sequestration, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 324, fos. 240v-241r.
- 6 Francis Holyoake, A Sermon of Obedience, Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall (1610), pp. 6-8, 11-13.

- 7 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 22.
- 8 The ministry of Samuel Buggs is examined in section three of the present chapter, and also in Chapter Seven.
- 9 Samuel Buggs, Davids Strait. A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross (1622), p. 7.
- 10 John Doughtie, A Sermon Touching Church Schismes, but the Unamimity of Orthodox Professors (1628), p. 16. This sermon was published with A Discourse Concerning the Abstrusenesse of Divine Mysteries. Together with our Knowledge of Them (1628). Both sermons were preached in Oxford in 1627.
- 11 Doughtie, Sermon Touching Church Schismes, p. 22.
- 12 Anthony Wood, The History and Antiquities of the University of Oxford (Oxford 1792-96), i, p. 374.
- 13 Wood, History and Antiquities, i, p. 375.
- 14 The original petition against Doughtie was destroyed in a fire in Birmingham Reference Library in 1879. Fortunately, a long extract from the petition was published by W. Staunton and W. H. Bloxam in Notices of the Churches of Warwickshire (1858), i, p. 149.
- 15 Buggs, Davids Strait, p. 7.

- 16 Doughtie, Abstrusenesse of Divine Mysteries, p. 15.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 18 Samuel Burton, A Sermon Preached at the General Assises in Warwicke (1619), p. 13.
- 19 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, pp. 12, 22.
- 20 John Doughtie, Velitationes Polemicae (1651), p. 250.
- 21 The efforts of Francis Holyoake to decorate his parish church at Southam are described in section three of the present chapter. The ministry of William Panting is examined in Chapter Seven.
- 22 Richard Parre, The End of the Perfect Man. A Sermon Preached at the Buriall of Sir Robert Spencer (1628), p. 22.
- 23 Warwick County Record Office, vestry order book, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/64, f. 50v.
- 24 Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises, p. 3.
- 25 Buggs, Midland Soldier, p. 29.
- 26 John Doughtie, The Kings Cause (1644), p. 20; Christopher Harvey, Self-Contradiction Censured (1662), p. 80. Harvey composed the

- royalist tract, Self Contradiction Censured, in 1642. It was circulated in manuscript until its publication in 1662.
- 27 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 3.
- 28 Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises, p. 2.
- 29 Harvey, Self-Contradiction Censured, p. 80.
- 30 Buggs, Midland Soldier, p. 9.
- 31 Parre, End of the Perfect Man, p. 11.
- 32 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 8. Despite their high regard for the office of bishop, none of the ministers quoted advocated "Divine Right" episcopacy. See William Lamont, Godly Rule (1969), Chapter Three.
- 33 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 7.
- 34 Christopher Harvey, The Right Rebel (1661), p. 74. This work had been composed in 1645.
- 35 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 8.
- 36 Staunton and Bloxam, Notices of the Churches of Warwickshire, i, p. 149.

- 37 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 18.
- 38 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 9; Doughtie, The Kings Cause, p. 15.
- 39 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, pp. 6-7.
- 40 Doughtie, Velitationes Polemicae, pp. 67-68.
- 41 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 22.
- 42 Doughtie, The Kings Cause, pp. 34-35; Harvey, Right Rebel, p. 104.
- 43 Buggs,  Davids Strait, p. 10.
- 44 Doughtie, Sermon Touching Church Schismes, p. 8.
- 45 Harvey, Self-Contradiction Censured, p. 80.
- 46 Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises, p. 14.
- 47 Harvey, Right Rebel, Preface, p. 5.
- 48 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, pp. 27-28.
- 49 Doughtie, Sermon Touching Church Schismes, p. 8.

- 50 Staunton and Bloxam, Notices of the Churches of Warwickshire, i, p. 149.
- 51 Harvey, Right Rebel, p. 104.
- 52 In their published sermons, Buggs and Doughtie referred to nonconformist members of the Church of England as "schismatics". Buggs, Davids Strait, p. 10; Doughtie, Sermon Touching Church Schismes, p. 8.
- 53 Doughtie, The Kings Cause, pp. 33-35.
- 54 Harvey, Right Rebel, Dedication, p. 3; Self-Contradiction Censured, Dedication, pp. 1-2.
- 55 Dugdale commented on Warde's royalism in the introduction to his transcript of Shustocke parish register in 1679. W.C R.O., DR(B)39/2, pp. 14-15.
- 56 A. G. Matthews, Walker Revised (2nd ed. Oxford 1988), pp. 362-367. The six ministers were William Clarke of Brinklow, John Doughtie of Lapworth, Francis Holyoake of Southam, Robert Kenrick of Burton Dasset, Edward Mansell of Stoneleigh and Henry Watkins of Sutton-under-Brailles. The role of the royalist clergy in 1642 is examined in Chapter Nine.
- 57 See Chapter Seven for a discussion of Panting's ministry in Coventry.



- 58 George Dale's treatment by parliamentary soldiers was described in a letter from Nehemiah Wharton to George Williamson in 1642. Public Record Office, SP16/491/138.
- 59 Parre was appointed as Bishop of Sodor and Mann in 1635. He remained in his diocese, which was held by royalist forces, until his death in 1644.
- 60 Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises
- 61 W.C.R.O., diary of Thomas Dugard, M1/290, fos. 99r-99v, 100v.
- 62 *Idid.*, fos. 99r-100v. See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 72, 79-79.
- 63 The lectureships at Birmingham and Nunueaton are described in Chapter Three. See Chapter Nine for an examination of the lectureship at Stratford.
- 64 Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, 1555-1640, A14a, f. 323v; W.C.R.O., M1/302, fos. 37, 58. See Chapter Seven for details of the alterations in Coventry's parish churches.
- 65 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Southam, DR50/9, pp. 191-192, 196, 205-206, 212. See section three for details.
- 66 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), pp. 5-6.

- 67 Victoria County History of Warwickshire, vi, p. 411.
- 68 Thomas Sharp, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry (1816), pp. 12, 19.
- 69 C.C.R.O., city annals, A48, f. 40r.
- 70 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 318r.
- 71 Clarke, "Brief Narrative of My Life", in Sundry Eminent Persons, p. 6.
- 72 W.C.R.O., corporation minute book, 1610-1662, CR1618/W21/6, p. 111.
- 73 The quote from Dugard's diary is taken from Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), p. 77.
- 74 Staunton and Bloxam, Notices of the Churches of Warwickshire, 1, p. 149.
- 75 P.R.O., letter from Nehemiah Wharton to George Williamson, 1642, SP/16491/133.
- 76 The survival of nonconformity in Coventry in the 1620s and 1630s is examined in Chapter Seven.

- 77 The survival of nonconformity in Warwick is described in Chapter Two. See also Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 72-80.
- 78 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 173v.
- 79 Clarke, "Brief Narrative of My Life", in Sundry Eminent Persons, p. 6; "Life" of Richard Vines, in Sundry Eminent Persons, p. 48.
- 80 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, Introduction.
- 81 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, p. 9.
- 82 John Burges, An Answer Rejoyned to that Much Applauded Pamphlet of a Namelesse Author (1631), pp. 4-5.
- 83 Doughtie, The Kings Cause, p. 22.
- 84 Richard Vines, Calebs Integrity in Following the Lord Fully (1642), pp. 21-22.
- 85 For the Puritanism of the Throckmorton family, see Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (2nd ed. 1990).
- 86 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Southam, DR50/9, pp. 64, 187, 219.
- 87 *Ibid.*, pp. 181, 192.

- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- 89 *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 187, 64, 143.
- 90 *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 196.
- 91 *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 83, 89-90, 156, 205-206, 213.
- 92 *Ibid.*, pp. 205-206.
- 93 *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- 94 *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 218.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 109.
- 96 *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 173, 182.
- 97 *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 115.
- 98 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- 99 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

## Chapter Five

- 1 Ephraim Huitt, The Anatomy of Conscience (1626), p. 19.
- 2 Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), pp. 26-27, 36-41.
- 3 Bishop Bilson's comment is quoted from Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (second edition, 1990), p. 441.
- 4 See Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, pp. 309-312, 391-395.
- 5 Warwick County Record Office, the will of Francis Leigh of Kings Newnham, 1625, CR136/C1935, p. 1.
- 6 W.C.R.O., will of Richard Newdigate, 1678, CR764/56.
- 7 W.C.R.O., CR136/C1935, p. 2.
- 8 Newdigate's journals and correspondence are examined in Section Two. See also V. Larminie, "The Lifestyle and Attitudes of the Seventeenth-Century Gentleman, with Special Reference to the Newdigates of Arbury Hall, Warwickshire", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980, Chapter Eighteen, pp. 396-409.

- 9 Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 67.
- 10 Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 1613-1618, 2760/802, fos. 60v, 65r.
- 11 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxix.
- 12 William Purefoy presented Richard Vines to the benefice of Caldecote in 1630. For Vines' career, see Chapter Three.
- 13 Brooke was the patron of John Giplin of Knowle and Samuel Clarke of Alcester. Both men were presented for nonconformity in 1635. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 21 (Gilpin); Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 14 Shilton presented John Burges to the benefice of Sutton Coldfield in 1617, and Anthony Burges (no relation) in 1635. John Burges was a moderate Puritan, who advocated the reform of church ceremonies but opposed disobedience to the bishops. Anthony Burges was an active parliamentarian in 1642, and later became a member of the Westminster Assembly.
- 15 Samuel Clarke, The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 48.
- 16 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 73-76.

- 17 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in Sundry Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 18 W.C.R.O., corporation minute book, 1610-1662, CR1618/W21/6, pp. 115-116.
- 19 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 166-167.
- 20 Sir William Dugdale named Temple, Purefoy and Combe as commissioners for the parliamentary militia in 1642. W.C.R.O., Dugdale's list of gentry supporters of King and parliament, 1642, Z237.
- 21 W.C.R.O., Z237.
- 22 For the financial position of Thomas Willoughby and Waldive Willington, see Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 150, 153.
- 23 In 1625 John Jennens entered into a highly successful partnership with his brother, Abrose, who marketed iron in London. The family built Erdington Hall in Erdington during the 1650s. For the background of Richard Newdigate, see Larminie, "Newdigates of Arbury", Ph.D. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980.
- 24 Sir Thomas Leigh of Stoneleigh was the patron of Stoneleigh and Ashow. His aunt, Lady Alice Dudley, was the benefactor of Stoneleigh, Ashow, Baginton, Kenilworth, Leek-Wootton, Mancetter

- and Monks Kirby. Lady Alice's daughter, Francis Levison, was the benefactor of Temple Balsall. The Leighs of Kings Newnham were the patrons and benefactors of Kings Newnham. Thomas Allestree, A Funeral Handkerchief (1692), Dedication p. 5.; Victoria County History of Warwickshire, iv, pp. 14, 141, 169, 180; F. L. Colville, Worthies of Warwickshire (1869), p. 246; W.C.R.O., CR136/C1935.
- 25 Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, "Caelica", xcvi, in Selected Poems, ed. Thom Gunn (1968), p. 127.
- 26 W.C.R.O., "MSS of the First Sir R.N.", M1/351/5/21, p. 619.
- 27 East Sussex Record Office, correspondence of the Temple and Busbridge families, Dunn MS 51/54.
- 28 Fulke Greville, "Caelica", xcvi, in Selected Poems, p. 127.
- 29 Fulke Greville, "Caelica", xcvi, in Selected Poems, p. 126.
- 30 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, pp. 13-16, 619-620.
- 31 Birmingham Central Reference Library, miscellaneous correspondence, MS 1098/112, Hester Jennens to her brother, 1625.
- 32 E.S.R.O., Dunn MSS 51/48, 49, 53, 54.



- 33 W.C.R.O., CR136/B346.
- 34 E.S.R.O., Dunn MS 51/53.
- 35 W.C.R.O., Newdigate family correspondence, Richard Newdigate to Ann Skeffington, 1635, CR136/B356.
- 36 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 103.
- 37 Thomas Dugard, Death and the Grave (1648), p. 48.
- 38 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 620.
- 39 Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, The Nature of Truth. Its Union and Unity with the Soule (1641), pp. 164-165.
- 40 Thomas Spencer, "The Genealogie, Life and Death of the Right Honourable Robert Lord Brooke" (1643), in Miscellany One, Publications of the Dugdale Society (1977), pp. 173-175; Samuel Clarke, A Generall Martyrologie (1651), Dedication, pp. 3-5.
- 41 W.C.R.O., Newdigate journal, 1630, CR136/A14, pp. 70, 80, 197, 205, 234 (my own pagination). For the preachers heard by Newdigate in London, see Larminie, "Newdigates of Arbury" Appendix XI.
- 42 Newdigate copied an extensive series of notes and maxims on the covers of a journal dated 1629. W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/18.

- 43 Spencer, "Life" of Brooke, in Miscellany One, pp. 173-174.
- 44 Dugard, Death and the Grave, pp. 46-47.
- 45 *Ibid.* p. 46.
- 46 W.C.R.O., CR136/346-365; E.S.R.O., Dunn MSS 51/50-64.
- 47 E.S.R.O., Dunn MS 51/52.
- 48 Samuel Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises in Warwicke (1619), p. 17.
- 49 Robert Greville, The Nature of Truth, pp. 48 (Huitt), 52 (Rutherford), 52-53 (Cotton), 74 (Goodwin).
- 50 Dugard, Death and the Grave, p. 46.
- 51 In 1637 a Star Chamber ruling prohibited "haberdashers and tradesmen" from selling books. This provoked a petition to Archbihop Laud from the mercers of Coventry, who were the main retailers of books in the town. Public Record Office, SP16/376/19.
- 52 B.C.R.L., miscellaneous correspondence, MS 1098/111, William Knight to his son, 1644, 1647.
- 53 W.C.R.O., will of Ann Newdigate, 1618, CR136/C1915, p. 2.

- 54 Clarke, A Generall Martyrologie, Dedication, pp. 3, 5; Dugard, Death and the Grave, p. 48.
- 55 Kenneth Parker has argued that the sanctification of the Sabbath was not a specifically "Puritan" characteristic. However, there can be little doubt that Puritans in Warwickshire placed a particular emphasis on Sabbatarianism, which was less evident among the Protestant community as a whole. This was demonstrated by the opposition to the re-issue of the Books of Sports in 1633, which was led by ministers and laymen who can be identified from other sources as "Puritans". Kenneth Parker, The English Sabbath, a Study of Doctrine and Discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War (Cambridge 1988).
- 56 Clarke, A Generall Martyrologie, Dedication, p. 4.
- 57 E.S.R.O., Dunn MS 51/62.
- 58 Robert Greville, The Nature of Truth, pp. 155-156.
- 59 The nonconformist preachers heard by Newdigate in Warwickshire were Samuel Clarke and Josiah Packwood. W.C.R.O., Newdigate journal, 1630, CR136/A14, pp. 205 (Clarke), 234, 242, 280, 293, 298, 304 (Packwood), Newdigate journal, 1631, CR136/A7, pp. 41 (Clarke), 45, 50, 144 (Packwood).
- 60 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, p. xxxix.

- 61 B.C.R.L., MS 1098/112, Hester Jennens to her brother, 1625.
- 62 Lord Brooke's circle of preachers at Warwick included Samuel Clarke, John Ball from Straffordshire, John Poynter and George Hughes from London. Clarke and Ball were presented for nonconformity during the 1630s. Poynter and Hughes were expelled from London for nonconformity in the same period. See Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 73.
- 63 Robert Greville, A Discourse Opening the Nature of that Episcopacie which is Exercised in England (1641), p. 102.
- 64 See Ronald A. Rebholz, The Life of Fulke Greville (Oxford 1971), pp. 17-31.
- 65 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 14.
- 66 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, p. 15.
- 67 E.S.R.O., Dunn MS 51/54.
- 68 Robert Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, p. 18.
- 69 Robert Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, p. 59.
- 70 The ways in which the experience of Laudianism encouraged supporters of parliament to demand reform of the established church are examined in Chapter Nine.

- 71 For Goodyear's career, see R. C. Bald, John Donne: A Life (Oxford 1970), pp. 163-171.
- 72 Michael Drayton, Odes with Other Lyrick Poesies (1619), Dedication.
- 73 Michael Drayton, "Mortimeriados", lines 1511-1519, in The Works of Michael Drayton, ed. W. Hebel (1931), i, p. 352.
- 74 Michael Drayton, "Poly Olbion", Song 24, lines 19-20, 37-50, in Works, iv, pp. 477-478.
- 75 John Donne, Paradoxes and Problems, in Selected Prose, ed. Neil Rhodes (1987), p. 57; John Donne, "The Cross", in Selected Poetry and Prose, eds. T.W. and R.J. Craik (1986), pp. 152-154.
- 76 John Donne, Letters to Severall Persons of Honour (1651), pp. 231-232.
- 77 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, p. 102.
- 78 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, p. 164.
- 79 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, pp. 154, 226.
- 80 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, pp. 100, 102.

- 81 For opposition to Charles' journey to Madrid in 1623, see Thomas Cogswell, "England and the Spanish Match", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds. Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642 (1989), pp. 107-130.
- 82 Public Record Office, "An Eulogie and Admiration of His Journey into Spaine", by Sir Henry Goodyear, 1623, SP14/145/12A, fos. 2r-2v.
- 83 P.R.O., SP14/145/12A, f. 2v.
- 84 P.R.O., SP14/145/12A, fos. 2v, 3v.
- 85 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, pp. 100-101.
- 86 Dictionary of National Biography, vi, pp. 122-124; Thomas Allestree, A Funeral Handkerchief (1692), Dedication pp. 4-5.
- 87 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 293, Leek-Wootton, DR38/31, p. 53; Victoria County History of Warwickshire, iv, pp. 14 (Ashow), 169 (Baginton), 180 (Monks Kirby).
- 88 Robert Boreman, A Mirrour of Christianity (1669), p. 23.
- 89 Boreman, Mirrour of Christianity, p. 17.

- 90 In 1621 Lady Alice's eldest daughter, Alicia, bequeathed the manor of Mancetter to the crown in her will. In return, part of the income from the manor was used to augment the maintenance of the clergy in six Warwickshire parishes, which were chosen by Lady Alice. The parishes which benefitted were Ashow, Kenilworth, Leek-Wootton, Mancetter, Monks Kirby and Stoneleigh. The details of this arrangement were recorded in Leek-Wootton Parish Register. W.C.R.O., DR38/31, p. 37.
- 91 Matthew, Walker Revised (2nd ed. Oxford 1988), pp. 365-366.
- 92 Boreman, Mirroure of Christianity, p. 12.
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 *Ibid.*
- 95 Nicholas Tyacke, Anti-Calvinists (1987), p. 220.
- 96 Dugdale's comment is quoted from F. R. Colville, Worthies of Warwickshire (1896), p. 246.
- 97 Thomas Allestree, Epaphroditus's Sickness and Recovery, in Three Sermons (1671), p. 49.
- 98 Allestree, Funeral Handkerchief (1692), p. 5.

- 99 W.C.R.O., "An Account of the Life of the Lady Lucy", L6/1246, pp. 7-8.
- 100 Robert Harris, Abner's Funerall, or A Sermon Preached at the Funerall of That Learned and Noble Knight. Sir Thomas Lucy (1641), Dedication, p. 2.
- 101 Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 45.
- 102 For Sir Thomas' friendship with Lord Herbert, Sir Henry Goodyear and Robert Harris, see Alice Fairfax-Lucy, Charlecote and the Lucys (1958), pp. 110-112, 119-122, 136.
- 103 Donne, Letters to Severall Persons, pp. 16-19, 200.
- 104 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1633-4, pp. 47-48.
- 105 Harris, Abner's Funerall, Dedication, pp. 2-3.
- 106 Harris, Abner's Funerall, p. 27.
- 107 Charles Henry Cooper, Annals of Cambridge (Cambridge 1842-53), iii, p. 145.
- 108 Dugard, Death and the Grave, pp. 46-47.
- 109 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 46-47.



- 110 John Ley, A Monitor of Mortalitie (1643), pp. 38-39.
- 111 Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 46-49.
- 112 Journals of the House of Lords, iv, p. 529.
- 113 W.C.R.O., Compton family papers, "The Humble Remonstrance and Peticon of the Knights, Gentlemen & others of the Countie of Warwick", 1642, M1/167/6.

## Chapter Six

- 1 Robert Harris, The Way to True Happinesse. Delivered in Twenty-Four Sermons upon the Beattitudes (1631), in The Works of Robert Harris (1654), p. 100.
- 2 Anthony Burges, The Difficulty of and the Encouragements to a Reformation (1643), p. 18.
- 3 Warwick County Record Office, Newdigate sermon notes, 1630, CR136/A14, pp. 306-307 (my own pagination), Newdigate sermon notes, 1631, CR136/A7, p. 50 (my own pagination).
- 4 Harris, The Way to True Happinesse, p. 255.

- 5 See Eamon Duffy, "The Godly and the Multitude in Stuart England", in The Seventeenth Century, 1 (1986).
- 6 Samuel Burton, A Sermon Preached at the General Assises in Warwicke (1619), pp. 27-28.
- 7 In 1635 24 parishes presented people for absence from church. 17 parishes presented people for this offence in 1639. These figures exclude people presented as Catholic recusants. Expressed as a total of the parishes represented in each visitation, 25% of parishes presented absentees in 1635, and 28% in 1639. Lichfield Joint Record Office, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, episcopal visitation book, 1639, B/V/1/63.
- 8 Lichfield Joint Record Office, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, pp. 67-68 (my own pagination).
- 9 Burton, Sermon Preached at the General Assises, pp. 27-28.
- 10 In 1617 and 1620 4% of the population of the deanery of Arden was recorded as excommunicate. This figure increased to 7% in 1635, then fell back to 4% in 1639. These figures are based on estimates of the combined population of the parishes recorded in each visitation, calculated from the hearth tax returns of 1663. They take into account the families of individuals excommunicated in the visitations, using a multiplier of 4.75. In each case, the parish of Birmingham has been excluded, since its large population and relatively small number of

- excommunicates tends to distort the results. L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1617, B/V/1/35, episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56, episcopal visitation book, 1639, B/V/1/63.
- 11 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, metropolitan visitation book, 1635, B/V/1/56.
  - 12 See Patrick Collinson, The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford 1982), pp. 214-217.
  - 13 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 26-28 (Solihull), 28-29 (Sheldon), 35 (Mancetter), 36-38 (Shustocke).
  - 14 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1639, B/V/1/63, pp. 13-15 (my own pagination).
  - 15 In 1617 8% of the population of Curdsworth was recorded as excommunicate. This figure was the same in 1639. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, p 14, B/V/1/63, p. 10.
  - 16 Brent's visitation recorded the excommunication of 25 parishioners from Leamington Hastings. Taking into account the families of those sentenced, this represented 23% of the population of the village. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 52-54, 122-127.
  - 17 In 1639 38 parishioners from Foleshill were excommunicated. Taking into account the families of those sentenced, this

- represented 37% of the parish population. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 38-40.
- 18 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 52-54, 122-127.
- 19 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, pp. 38-40.
- 20 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 83.
- 21 Articles to be Enquired of Within the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield (1629), Article 48.
- 22 In 1623 four parishioners from Tanworth performed penance "for keepinge excommunicated pferlsons companie". Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, certificate of penance from Tanworth, 1623, 2302/795.02/1, f. 113.
- 23 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 226.
- 24 W.C.R.O., CR136/A7, p. 50.
- 25 For an assessment of irreligion and skepticism in seventeenth-century England, see Christopher Hill, "Irreligion in the Puritan Revolution", in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., Radical Religion in the English Revolution (1984). The subject is also examined by Martin Ingram in The Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1590-1642 (Cambridge 1987), pp. 95-96.

- 26 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation book, 1620, B/V/1/40, first half of volume, f. 17r.
- 27 Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, churchwardens' presentments, 1624, ER1/115, f. 44.
- 28 Separatist congregations of various kinds were active in Coventry and Warwick between 1642 and 1650. For Coventry, see Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (1691), pp. 45-6. For Warwick, see Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 9.
- 29 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, p. 27.
- 30 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 1 (Allesley), 31 (Whitacre), 35 (Packington), 37 (Shustocke), 50 (Churchover), 52-53 (Leamington Hastings), 62-63 (Sowe), 83 (Milverton), 91 (Stoneleigh), 93 (Wolston), 94-5 (Ichington), 113 (Ladbroke), 115 (Maxton).
- 31 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 37 (Shustocke), 113 (Ladbroke). Keith Thomas has emphasised the disorderly conduct of services in Religion and the Decline of Magic (1971), pp. 161-162.
- 32 W.C.R.O. churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 39, Kineton, DR212/30, p. 5, St Nicholas', Warwick, DR87/2, p. 20.
- 33 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 1 (Allesley), 52-53 (Leamington Hastings), 62-63 (Sowe), 77-8 (Baggington), 83 (Milverton), 98 (Grendon).

- 34 L.J.R.O., episcopal visitation, 1636, B/V/1/58, f. 36r.
- 35 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, fos. 7r (Wappenbury), 36r (Birmingham), 28r (Coventry), 52r (Sutton Coldfield).
- 36 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1629, Nuneaton.
- 37 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1637, Polesworth.
- 38 The dispute about the seats in St Michael's church in Coventry is described in Chapter Seven.
- 39 See Martin Ingram, The Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1590-1642 (Cambridge 1987), pp. 323-329.
- 40 John Morrill, "The Church in England, 1642-1649", in John Morrill, ed., Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649 (1982).
- 41 A total of 17 parishes presented recusants in the visitation of the archdeaconry of Coventry in 1617, 20 in 1620, 23 in 1635 and 12 in 1639. Expressed as a percentage of the number of parishes recorded in each visitation, 22% presented recusants in 1617, 19% in 1620, and 20% in 1635 and 1639. L.J.R.O., B/V/1/35, B/V/1/40, B/V/1/56, B/V/1/63.
- 42 See Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), pp. 134-135.

- 43 The attitude of the Puritan clergy towards May Games is described in Chapter Three.
- 44 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 18.
- 45 Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 2760/802, f. 32r.
- 46 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 50.
- 47 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, pp. 177-192.
- 48 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, p. 50.
- 49 Strange Newes from Warwicke (1642), pp. 7-8.
- 50 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/29, p. 14 (Shustocke); H.W.C.R.O., 2760/802, f. 66r (Alcester).
- 51 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1615, Wishaw.
- 52 See Appendix I.
- 53 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1629, Handsworth.
- 54 See Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 77.

- 55 Public Record Office, articles against William Pinson and John Rogers, 1638, SP16/388/41, p. 1.
- 56 See Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 77.
- 57 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of my Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 4.
- 58 See Appendix I.
- 59 P.R.O., articles against Thomas Robinson, 1637, SP16/370/91, articles against William Pinson and John Rogers, 1638, SP16/388/41.
- 60 See Appendix I.
- 61 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 21.
- 62 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 11.
- 63 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, f. 29v.
- 64 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/63, p. 41.
- 65 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, pp. 62-3 (Sowe); P.R.O., SP16/370/91 (Brinklow).
- 66 P.R.O., SP16/388/41, pp. 2-3.



- 67 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 16, B/V/1/63, p. 41.
- 68 Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England (2nd ed. 1986); K. Wrightson and D. Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (1979), pp. 173-185.
- 69 Collinson, Religion of Protestants, pp. 239-241; Magaret Spufford, "Puritanism and Social Control?", in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., Order and Disorder in Early Modern England (Cambridge 1985).
- 70 The social composition of the Puritan and anti-Puritan factions in Stratford is examined in Chapter Eight.
- 71 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 4.
- 72 The letter was appended an anonymous pamphlet, The Proceedings at Banbury Since the Ordnance Went Down for the Lord Brooke (1642), p. 8.
- 73 The popular support for Parliament in Coventry and Birmingham is described in Chapter Seven.
- 74 The influence of Puritans in Warwick corporation was demonstrated by the appointment of "godly" lecturers in the town in the 1620s and 1630s, notably Samuel Clarke and Thomas

Spencer. The activity of Puritans in the Coventry corporation is examined in Chapter Seven.

- 75 W.C.R.O., "MSS of the First Sir R. N.", M1/351/5/21, pp. 416, 391, CR136/A14, pp. 208-209.
- 76 P.R.O., SP16/370/91.
- 77 P.R.O., SP16/388/41, p. 5.
- 78 W.C.R.O., CR136/A7, p. 54.
- 79 Samuel Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse, both for Saints and Sinners (1646).
- 80 Abiezer Coppe, Copp's Return to the Wayes of Truth (1651), in Selected Writings, ed. Andrew Hopkins (1987), p. 73.
- 81 *Ibid.*
- 82 *Ibid.*
- 83 Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, 1555-1640, A14a, f. 278v.
- 84 W.C.R.O., corporation minute book, 1610-1662, CR1618/W21/6, p. 87.

- 85 P.R.O., bill of complaint by Thomas Robinson against William Hall, 1622, STAC8/245/27.
- 86 P.R.O., bill of complaint by Stratford corporation, 1621, STAC/26/10. The conflict between Puritans and anti-Puritans in Stratford is examined in Chapter Eight.
- 87 John Smyth, Paralleles, Censures, Observations (1609), p. 129.
- 88 See Victoria County History of Warwickshire, viii, p. 373.
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse (second edition, 1651), pp. 218-220. Grimswold's story was also recorded by Sir William Dugdale in Antiquities of Warwickshire (1656), p. 300.
- 91 Canne's career is described by John F. Wilson in "Another Look at John Canne", in Church History, vol. 33 (1964).
- 92 H.W.C.R.O., presentment from Tanworth, 1631, 2302/795.02/3, f. 544.
- 93 Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse (second edition, 1651), p. 219.
- 94 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 9.

- 95 See Patrick Collinson, The Religion of Protestants, pp. 268-283.
- 96 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 53.
- 97 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/40, second half of volume, f. 13r, consistory court papers, B/C/5/1626, Leamington-Hastings.
- 98 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 126.
- 99 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/56, p. 63.
- 100 *Ibid.*
- 101 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/40, second half of volume, f. 8v; P.R.O., letter from Nehemiah Wharton to George Williamson, 1642, SP16/491/138.
- 102 Ephraim Huitt, The Anatomy of Conscience (1626), pp. 33-34.
- 103 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, pp. 237, 307, CR136/A7, p. 50.
- 104 Burges, The Difficulty of a Reformation, p. 16.
- 105 The anti-Puritan satires were reproduced in a bill of complaint from Stratford corporation in 1621. P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 106 P.R.O., STAC8/245/27.
- 107 L.J.R.O., consistory court papers, B/C/5/1629, Handsworth.

- 108 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 109 Huitt, The Anatomy of Conscience, p. 75.
- 110 P.R.O., STAC8/245/27.
- 111 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1629, Handsworth.
- 112 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 113 *Ibid.*
- 114 L.J.R.O., B/C/5/1629, Handsworth.
- 115 *Ibid.*
- 116 Burton, Sermon Preached at the General Assises, p. 13.
- 117 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10, STAC8/245/27.
- 118 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 7.
- 119 Thomas Hall, Fuebria Florae. The Downfall of May-Games (1662),  
pp. 13-14.
- 120 W.C.R.O., CR136/A14, pp. 208-209.

- 121 W.C.R.O., M1/351/5/21, pp. 460-467, 562, 579 (Malin), CR136/A14, p. 244 (Packwood). The fear of Puritan divines that "popish" innovations would prove attractive to the laity is discussed by Robin Clifton in "Fear of Popery", in Conrad Russell, ed., The Origins of the English Civil War (1973).
- 122 Burges, The Difficulty of a Reformation, p. 21.
- 123 Hall, Downfall of May-Games, pp. 14.
- 124 The churchwardens of St Nicholas' spent 35s 1d on bread and wine for the Easter communion in 1630. This rose to 38s 7d in 1635, and 40s 2d in 1640. W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, St Nicholas, Warwick, DR87/2, pp. 67, 110, 148.
- 125 In the majority of parishes, the expenditure of churchwardens on bread and wine shows no clear pattern during the 1630s. In Ryton-upon-Dunsmore, for example, expenditure on the Christmas and Midsummer communions was constant throughout the decade, while expenditure on the Easter communion fell slightly from 6s 3d in 1633 to 4s 2d in 1638. In Fillongley, spending on the Easter communion increased from 10s 3d in 1630 to 13s 10d in 1637, then fell to 12s 4d in the following year. W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Ryton, DR11/10, pp. 67, 91, Fillongley, DR404/49, pp. 9, 14.
- 126 See Footnote 6.

- 127 A.G. Matthews, Walker Revised (Oxford, 2nd ed. 1988), p. 366.
- 128 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxviii. See Chapter Seven for details of Carpenter's ministry in Coventry.
- 129 W.C.R.O., vestry order book, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/64, f. 56r.
- 130 John Morrill has argued that the ceremonies of the established church retained the support of a large part of the population during the 1640s. John Morrill, "The Church in England, 1642-1649", in J. Morrill, ed, Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649 (1982), pp. 89-114.

## Chapter Seven

- 1 Samuel Buggs, Dauids Strait. A Sermon Preached at Pauls Cross (1622), Dedication, p. 3.
- 2 Coventry City Record Office, "Booke touching ship money", A35.
- 3 See Patrick Collinson, The Elizabethan Puritan Movement (second edition, 1990), pp. 327-328.
- 4 See D. McGavin, John Penry and the Marprelate Controversy (New Brunswick 1966), pp. 101-111.

- 5 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1683), p. 3.
- 6 Benjamin Poole, Coventry, its History and Antiquities (1870), p. 256.
- 7 C.C.R.O., corporation minute book, 1555-1640, A14a, f. 271r.
- 8 Julines Herring was the son of John Herring, who was elected mayor of Coventry in 1616. As a young man he received "special encouragement in the study of divinity" from Humphrey Fenn. Samuel Clarke, The Lives of Thirty-Two English Divines (1677), p. 160.
- 9 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 5.
- 10 Humphrey Fenn, Preface to the Last Will and Testament (1642), pp. 2-3.
- 11 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 173v, city annals, 958/1, f. 32r.
- 12 C.C.R.O., 958/1, f. 32r.
- 13 Collinson, Elizabethan Puritan Movement, p. 327.
- 14 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 182v.



- 15 The corporation minute book stated that John Oxenbridge was preaching the lecture at St John's in 1609. The lectureship was given to Humphrey Fenn in 1624, who apparently retained it until his death. There is no record of either man preaching in St Michael's or Holy Trinity. C.C.R.O., A14a, fos. 173v (Oxenbridge), 271r, 273r, 307r (Fenn).
- 16 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, pp. 5-6.
- 17 Francis Holyoake, A Sermon of Obedience, Especially unto Authoritie Ecclesiasticall (1610), Introduction.
- 18 C.C.R.O., city annals, A48, f. 35r, 958/1, f. 32r; British Library, city annals, Add. MS 11364, f. 13v.
- 19 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 278v.
- 20 British Library, Add. MS 11364, f. 14v.
- 21 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 278v.
- 22 C.C.R.O., letter from James I to the mayor and aldermen of Coventry, 1611, A79/35.
- 23 C.C.R.O., the King's reply to a petition from Coventry corporation, 1611, A79/97, f. 3.
- 24 C.C.R.O., 958/1, f. 32v.

- 25 C.C.R.O., certificate from Bishop Morton, May 1621, A34/157.
- 26 C.C.R.O., certificate from Bishop Morton, June 1621, A34/158.
- 27 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, Introduction.
- 28 C.C.R.O., volume of miscellanea, A37, p. 39.
- 29 C.C.R.O., A37, p. 37.
- 30 Holyoake, Sermon of Obedience, Introduction.
- 31 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 35v; Sharp, Illustrative Papers, p. 18.
- 32 C.C.R.O., 958/1, f. 36v.
- 33 Warwick County Record Office, churchwardens' accounts, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/46, p. 47 (my own pagination).
- 34 W.C.R.O., bills and receipts from Holy Trinity, Coventry, M1/302, f. 36.
- 35 W.C.R.O., DR581/46, pp. 17, 31.
- 36 Buggs, Dauids Strait, Dedication.
- 37 Samuel Buggs, The Mid-Land Soldier (1622), p. 29-30.

- 38 Buggs, Dauids Strait, p. 10.
- 39 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 291r.
- 40 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, pp. 5-6.
- 41 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 304r.
- 42 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 5.
- 43 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 6.
- 44 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 42r.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 299v.
- 47 The corporation's petition was quoted by Bishop Morton in a letter to Buggs in June 1632. Public Record Office, SP/16/218/77.
- 48 P.R.O., letter from Bishop Morton to Samuel Buggs, 1632, SP/16/218/77.
- 49 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 318r.
- 50 W.C.R.O., DR581/46, pp. 104, 106-108, 122.

- 51 W.C.R.O., vestry order book, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/64, f. 50v.
- 52 Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxviii.
- 53 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 307r.
- 54 Sharp, Illustrative Papers, pp. 12, 19.
- 55 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 40r.
- 56 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 42r.
- 57 Edmund Calamy, The Nonconformist's Memorial, ed. Samuel Palmer (1775), ii, p. 486.
- 58 John Burgoyne was presented to the episcopal visitation in 1636 for refusing to stand to recite the creed. Lichfield Joint Record Office, episcopal visitation book, 1636, B/V/1/58, f. 29v.
- 59 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 307r.
- 60 New College, Oxford, diary of Robert Woodford, MS 9502, p. 267 (my own pagination).
- 61 Edmund Calamy, Nonconformist's Memorial, ed. Palmer, ii, p. 487.
- 62 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, p. xxxviii.

- 63 L.J.R.O., B/V/1/58, f. 29v.
- 64 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, p. xxxviii.
- 65 New College, Oxford, MS 9502, p. 267.
- 66 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, xxxviii.
- 67 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 323v.
- 68 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 337v.
- 69 P.R.O., letter from Charles Twysden to Archbishop Laud, 1638,  
SP16/385/67. See below for details, p. 16.
- 70 P.R.O., letter from Thomas Byrd to Archbishop Laud, 1637,  
SP/16/350/52. See below for details, p. 16.
- 71 W.C.R.O., DR581/46, pp. 185-187.
- 72 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, p. xxxviii.
- 73 W.C.R.O., DR581/64, f. 56r.
- 74 W.C.R.O., DR581/46, pp. 222-223.
- 75 W.C.R.O., M1/302, fos. 37, 58.

- 76 W.C.R.O., DR581/46, pp. 248, 256.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 78 New College, Oxford, MS 9502, p. 191.
- 79 P.R.O., letter from Bishop Wright to Samuel Buggs, 1632,  
SP16/229/112.
- 80 Fenn, Preface to the Last Will and Testament, p. 3.
- 81 C.C.R.O., A14a, fos. 331r, 334v.
- 82 C.C.R.O., A14a, f. 342r.
- 83 P.R.O., letter from Charles Twysden to Archbishop Laud, 1638,  
SP16/385/67.
- 84 P.R.O., instructions to the churchwardens of Coventry, 1636,  
SP16/330/40.
- 85 P.R.O., letter from Thomas Byrd to Archbishop Laud, 1637,  
SP16/350/52, letter from Edward Latham to Sir John Lambe, 1637,  
SP16/351/18.
- 86 In 1641 the rails were removed from the communion table in Holy  
Trinity, and the table was taken into the nave. This reform was  
apparently not necessary in St Michael's. W.C.R.O., DR581/64,

- fos. 70v-71r; Poole, Coventry, its History and Antiquities, p. 188.
- 87 P.R.O., SP16/350/52.
- 88 Peter Heylyn, Cyprianus Anglicus (1668), p. 288.
- 89 See Footnote 86.
- 90 C.S.P.D. 1635, Preface, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.
- 91 P.R.O., examination of John Maynard, SP16/368. See below for details of Prynne's confinement in Coventry, pp. 18-19.
- 92 New College, Oxford, MS 9502, p. 191.
- 93 P.R.O., petition from the mercers of Coventry to Archbishop Laud, 1637, SP16/376/19.
- 94 P.R.O., Privy Council register, 1637, PC2/48, p. 359.
- 95 P.R.O., PC2/48, p. 374.
- 96 P.R.O., examination of John Maynard, SP16/368.
- 97 W.C.R.O., DR581/64, fos. 70v-71r.
- 98 *Ibid.*, f. 72r.

- 99 C.C.R.O., corporation minute book, 1640-1696, A14b, fos. 23v, 24v, 26v.
- 100 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 42r.
- 101 Journals of the House of Lords, v, pp. 163-164.
- 102 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 42r.
- 103 C.C.R.O., A14b, f. 28v.
- 104 C.C.R.O., A48, f. 41v.
- 105 C.C.R.O., A14b, f. 30v.
- 106 C.C.R.O., A48, fos. 42r-42v.
- 107 The royal warrant is reproduced in W. Hamper, The Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale (1827), p. 17.
- 108 C.C.R.O., letter from John Whitwick to the corporation, 1642, A79/208.
- 109 Hamper, Dugdale, p. 17.
- 110 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696), p. 45.



- 111 The benefices of Sutton Coldfield and Rugby were held by Anthony Burges and James Nalton respectively. Both men were committed Puritans and active supporters of parliament in 1642. Residents of Birmingham and Tanworth were prosecuted in the ecclesiastical courts for offences connected with Puritanism in the 1630s. Worcester Record Office, churchwardens' papers, MS 2302/795.02/3, f. 544 (Tanworth); P.R.O., articles against William Pinson and John Rogers, SP16/388/41 (Birmingham).
- 112 Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), pp. 147-148.
- 113 Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, p. 44. Baxter named twelve ministers who had taken refuge in Coventry in the summer of 1642. These included Tristram Diamond, Anthony Burges, Richard Vines and William Overton.
- 114 P.R.O., letter from Nehemiah Wharton to George Williamson, 1642, SP16/491/133, f. 2.
- 115 P.R.O., N. Wharton to G. Williamson, 1642, SP16/491/138, f. 1.
- 116 P.R.O., SP16/491/138, f. 2.
- 117 C.C.R.O., A14b, f. 31r.
- 118 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, ed. W. Macray (1888), II, p. 290.

## Chapter Eight

- 1 Public Record Office, letter from Bishop Thornborough to Archbishop Laud, 1636, SP16/319/71.
- 2 Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, council book, 1593-1628, BRU2/2, p. 235; council book, 1628-1657, BRU2/3, p. 202.
- 3 S.B.T., BRU/3, p. 91; Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xl.
- 4 S.B.T., BRU/3, p. 99.
- 5 S.B.T., volume of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/11, f. 3.
- 6 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 166-167, 175, 196.
- 7 Vestry Minute Book of Stratford-upon-Avon (1890 ), pp. 11, 13, 20, 25, 32.
- 8 S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 224, 269, 325, 335, 387, 450.
- 9 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 269.
- 10 S.B.T., volume of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/13, f. 48.
- 11 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 14, 30, 51.

- 12    Whately's lectureship at Stratford was mentioned by Bishop Thornborough in his annual account of the diocese in 1637. This was appended to William Laud, History of the Troubles and Tryal of Archbishop William Laud (1695), p. 552.
- 13    S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 325.
- 14    Vestry Minute Book, p. 42.
- 15    S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 263, 365.
- 16    S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 403, 521, 523; BRU/3, pp. 14, 56, 81, 87-88, 90, 93, 96, 134, 143-144, 146, 156. The dispute between Wilson and the corporation is discussed in section three.
- 17    The act books from 1590-1608 and 1622-1624 are reproduced in E. R. C. Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court of Stratford (1972), pp. 120-174. Part of the 1633 act book is preserved in a volume of miscellaneous documents at the S.B.T., BRU15/13, f. 103.
- 18    S.B.T., churchwardens' papers, ER1/115, fos. 6-77, volumes of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/1, f. 60, BRU15/7, f. 78, BRU15/13, f. 97, BRU15/17, f. 26.
- 19    Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 151, 165; S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 47.

- 20 S.B.T., BRU15/13, f. 103, ff. 8v.
- 21 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 24, 25, 42. In 1636 Bishop Thornborough informed Archbishop Laud that Wilson had assumed a "pretended absolute jurisdiction" in Stratford in the 1620s, but had subsequently amended his ways. P.R.O., SP16/319/71.
- 22 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 475.
- 23 S.B.T., BRU15/13, f. 103, ff. 7v.
- 24 S.B.T., BRU/3, p. 129.
- 25 S.B.T., volume of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/16, f. 13.
- 26 S.B.T., BRU15/16, f. 54, BRU/2, pp. 468, 479; P.R.O., High Commission act book, SP16/261, f. 295, SP16/324, f. 19.
- 27 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 479.
- 28 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 12-17.
- 29 Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 148-152.
- 30 Martin Ingram, Church Courts. Sex and Marriage in England. 1570-1640 (Cambridge 1990), pp. 340-356.
- 31 S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 9.

- 32 S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 11.
- 33 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 19, 54, 56, 67.
- 34 S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 18.
- 35 S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 51.
- 36 S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 76.
- 37 P.R.O., bill of complaint from Stratford corporation,  
STAC8/26/10.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 14, 15.
- 40 K. Wrightson and D. Levine, Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525-1700 (1979), pp. 173-185. Wrightson's argument has been challenged by Patrick Collinson in The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society, 1559-1625 (Oxford 1982), pp. 239-241.
- 41 Five members of the corporation were attacked by name in the confederates' libels. They were Henry Smith, John Wilmore, Daniel Baker, William Chaundler and Richard Castle. Thomas Lucas, the corporation's lawyer, was also named as one of the instigators of Rogers' removal. P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.

- 42 The five "gentlemen" named in the corporation's bill were John Nashe, Thomas Rutter, William Reynolds, Richard Wyatt and John Lawe. P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 43 The four yeomen were John Pinke, John Rogers, William Nixon and William Hathaway. In July 1619 Pinke was presented to the peculiar court for defaming the wife of John Gunn, one of Wilson's supporters. This case apparently referred to one of the confederates' libels, which alleged that Gunn had been cuckolded by his wife. If this was the case, it is possible that Pinke was the author of the other confederate libels as well. P.R.O., STAC8/26/10; S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 14.
- 44 The other confederates named in the corporation's bill were Thomas Mills, a weaver, Thomas Court, a blacksmith, William Smith, a maltster, Raphe Smith, a haberdasher, and Joan Askowe, the wife of Richard Askowe. P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 45 S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 172, 366.
- 46 From the available evidence, it appears that John Rogers conformed to the ceremonies of church. In 1615 a couple from Stratford were presented to Worcester consistory court for travelling to Hatton in order to marry "without the ring", having refused a canonical wedding service at Stratford. Rogers himself was never presented for nonconformity. Hereford and Worcester County Record Office, visitation act book, 1613-1618, 2760/802, f. 22v.

- 47 P.R.O., SP16/261, f. 275, SP16/324, f. 19.
- 48 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 49 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 30, 51; Laud, History of the Troubles and Tryal, p. 552.
- 50 S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 212, 228, 291, 351.
- 51 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 52 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10; S.B.T., ER1/115/14.
- 53 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 54 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 204, BRU15/13/2.
- 55 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 56 John Pinke, John Lawe and William Nixon were presented to the peculiar court in 1619. Thomas Courte and William Smith were presented in 1622. S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 14, 15, 37, 38; Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, p. 160.
- 57 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 58 *Ibid.*

- 59 Samuel Burton, A Sermon Preached at the Generall Assises in Warwicke (1619), p. 13.
- 60 P.R.O., bill of complaint from Thomas Robinson, 1622, STAC 8/245/27.
- 61 P.R.O., STAC8/26/10.
- 62 *Ibid.*
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 In January 1621 the corporation sent a certificate of Wilson's behaviour to the consistory court. This affirmed his conformity and apparently denied specific allegations against him: "as kneeling at the sacrament of the Lord's super, baptiseing with the signe of the cross, weareing the surplus [and] marrying with the ringe". The corporation sent a second certificate, specifying the same matters, in 1625. S.B.T., BRU15/16, f. 54, BRU/2, p. 468.
- 66 S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 468, 479.
- 67 S.B.T., BRU15/16, f. 54.
- 68 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 468.



- 69 S.B.T., BRU/2, p. 479.
- 70 The fifth member of the corporation named in the libels was William Chaundler, who died in 1636.
- 71 See footnote 46.
- 72 S.B.T., BRU15/16, f. 54, BRU/2, pp. 468, 479; P.R.O., SP16/261, f. 275, SP16/324, f. 19.
- 73 In February and March 1623 the peculiar court was convened in Wilson's vicarage. Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 160-161.
- 74 P.R.O., SP16/319/71.
- 75 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 21, 29, 31, 34, 36 (1621-2), 54, 55, 56, 58 (1627-8), BRU15/1, f. 60 (1628).
- 76 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 31, 34, 44, 48, BRU15/1, f. 60.
- 77 No cases of blasphemy were recorded in the surviving act books from 1606-1608. Three cases were recorded in 1622, and another two in 1624. Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 149, 154, 164, 165.
- 78 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 13, 21, 34, 44, 50, 51, 54, 55, 58, 76, BRU15/1, f. 60, BRU15/7, f. 78.

- 79 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 19, 29, 31, 54, 58.
- 80 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 54, 55, 56, 58, 59, 76.
- 81 S.B.T., volume of miscellaneous documents, BRU15/5, f. 153.
- 82 S.B.T., BRU15/13, f. 97.
- 83 S.B.T., BRU15/7, f. 76.
- 84 S.B.T., ER1/115, fos. 44, 58; Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 164, 170.
- 85 Brinkworth, Shakespeare and the Bawdy Court, pp. 153, 163.
- 86 In 1614 Richard Wright, the curate of Luddington, was presented to Worcester consistory court for allowing a silenced minister to preach in his church. H.W.C.R.O., 2760/802, f. 13v.
- 87 The only reference to nonconformity in the surviving papers of the peculiar court is a presentment from Luddington in May 1624. This asserted that the curate, Francis Smith, did "not constantly wear his surplice & hood", but added that "it is not for that he refuseth to conforme". The act book, which survives from the same period, shows that no action was taken against the curate. S.B.T., ER1/115, f. 43.
- 88 S.B.T., BRU/2, pp. 403, 432, 521, BRU/3, p. 14.

- 89 In 1636 Henry Smith petitioned Archbishop Laud to continue the proceedings against Wilson in the High Commission, asserting that he had "been scandalized by the said mr Wilson in his preaching & other ways much injured". P.R.O., SP16/320/59.
- 90 Victoria County History of Warwickshire, iii, p. 281.
- 91 See footnote 89.
- 92 S.B.T., BRU/3, p. 162.
- 93 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 14, 166; Laud, History of the Troubles and Tryal, p. 552.
- 94 Robert Harris, The Way to True Happinesse. Delivered in Twenty-Four Sermons upon the Beautitudes (1631).
- 95 Robert Harris, A sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons (1642), Dedication, pp. 2-3.
- 96 For Whateley's activities in Banbury, see Patrick Collinson, The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (2nd ed. 1991), pp. 137-139.
- 97 See Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire, 1620-1660 (1987), p. 65.

- 98 Laud, History of the Troubles and Tryal, p. 552.
- 99 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 72, 75-77.
- 100 John Trapp, Theologia Theologiae, The True Treasure (1642), pp. 223-225.
- 101 P.R.O., SP16/324, f. 19.
- 102 S.B.T., BRU15/13, f. 97, BRU15/17, f. 26; BRU15/13, f. 103, ff. 7v.
- 103 P.R.O., SP16/319/71.
- 104 P.R.O., SP16/320/59.
- 105 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 72, 77.
- 106 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 134, 143, 144, 146, 156.
- 107 The religious situation in Warwickshire between 1640 and 1642 is described in Chapter Nine.
- 108 Warwick County Record Office, diary of Thomas Dugard, M1/290, f. 91v.
- 109 Trapp, The True Treasure, p. 182.
- 110 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 191, 202.

- 111 S.B.T., BRU/3, pp. 197, 205.
- 112 S.B.T., BRU/3, p. 209.
- 113 V.C.H., iii, p. 235.
- 114 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 151-152.
- 115 Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 324, f. 140v.
- 116 The Warwickshire Ministers Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, and to the Solemn League and Covenant (1648), p. 3.

## Chapter Nine

- 1 Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, A Discourse Opening the Nature of that Episcopacie which is Exercised in England (1641), p. 90.
- 2 Between 1640 and 1642, the Book of Indictments recorded disturbances in the parish churches of Rowington, Preston-Baggot, Haselor and Napton. Similar incidents were recorded at Allesley in 1632 and Leamington-Hastings in 1636. Quarter Sessions Book of Indictments, 1632-1642 (1941), Warwick County Records, vi, pp. 7, 32, 56, 57, 63, 67-68.

- 3    Quarter Sessions Indictments, pp. 56, 67-68. Unfortunately, the  
indictments provide no details about the causes of the  
disturbances at Rowington and Napton.
- 4    Warwick County Record Office, constables' accounts, Fillongley,  
DR404/85, p. 61.
- 5    W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kingsbury, DR(B)3/39, pp. 165-  
166.
- 6    The six parishes which presented recusants to the Quarter  
Sessions in 1641 were Morton-Baggot, Leamington-Priors,  
Pillerton, Shottery, Henley-in-Arden, Rowington and Marton.  
Quarter Sessions Indictments, pp. 61, 62, 64, 66.
- 7    The parishes were Rowington, Alveston, Coleshill, Henley-in-  
Arden, Ullenhall, Grove-Park, Norton, Wootton-Wawen, Boalhall,  
Leamington-Priors, Balsall and Berkswell. Quarter Sessions  
Indictments, pp. 66-70.
- 8    The Two Petitions of the County of Warwick and Coventry (1642),  
Petition to Lords, p. 5.
- 9    W.C.R.O., DR(B)3/39, p. 157.
- 10    W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Southam, DR50/9, pp. 224-225.
- 11    Journals of the House of Lords, iv, p. 440.

- 12 Ann Hughes, Politics, Society and Civil War in Warwickshire (1987), pp. 134-135.
- 13 Coventry City Record Office, corporation minute book, 1640-1696, A14b, f. 23v.
- 14 Two Petitions, Petition to Commons, p. 1.
- 15 Quarter Sessions Book of Orders, 1625-1642 (1936), Warwick County Records, ii, p. 116.
- 16 W.C.R.O., diary of Thomas Dugard, 1632-1642, M1/290, fos. 99r-100v.
- 17 Birmingham Central Reference Library, "A Brief Narrative of the Life and Death of Thomas Hall, Late Pastor of Kings-Norton", LF78.1/HAL/467148, p. 53.
- 18 W.C.R.O., churchwardens' accounts, Kenilworth, DR296/6, p. 110, Kineton, DR212/30, p. 5, Ryton, DR11/10, p. 91.
- 19 Samuel Clarke, "A Brief Narrative of My Life", in The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons (1682), p. 7.
- 20 B.C.R.L., LF78.1/HAL/467148, p. 49.
- 21 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, pp. 7-8.

- 22 The ministers who attended the meeting at Warwick in December 1640 were Thomas Blake of Tanworth, John Bryan of Barford, Anthony Burges of Sutton Coldfield, Henry Butler of Wasperton, Samuel Clarke of Alcester, John Dowley of Alveston, John Gilpin of Knowle, Simon Moore of Frankton, Josiah Packwood of Fillongley, Francis Smith of Bedworth, Thomas Spencer of Budbrooke, James Sutton of Fenny-Compton, John Trapp and Simon Trapp of Stratford, Henry Twitchett of Stratford, "Mr Wyllis" and "Mr Wootten". W.C.R.O., diary of Thomas Dugard, M1/290, f. 91v.
- 23 Thomas Warmestrey was one of the organisers of the original south-Warwickshire petition. In 1640 he attacked the ecclesiastical policies of the 1630s in a speech to convocation, which is quoted in Chapter Three. Henry Twitchett signed the petition against the canons in December 1640. Thomas Warmestrey, A Convocation Speech (1641); W.C.R.O., M1/290, f. 91v.
- 24 John Bryan and Anthony Burges were two of the ministers who took refuge in Coventry in 1642, and subsequently participated in the town lectures. For Samuel Clarke, see Chapter Three.
- 25 Nine of the ministers who attended the meeting in Warwick in 1640 later subscribed to the Ministers Testimony. They were John Bryan, Henry Butler, John Dowley, Thomas Dugard, Simon Moore, Francis Smith, James Sutton, Thomas Spencer and John Trapp. W.C.R.O., M1/290, f. 91v; The Warwickshire Ministers



- Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ and to the Solemn League and Covenant (1648), p. 3.
- 26 Edmund Calamy, The Nonconformists Memorial, ed. Samuel Palmer (1775), i, pp. 88-93 (Clarke), ii, pp. 481-482 (Gilpin), 491 (Burges).
- 27 B.C.R.L., LF78.1/HAL/467148, pp. 46-47; Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1635, Preface, p. xxxix.
- 28 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, p. 8.
- 29 Robert Harris, A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons (1642).
- 30 Richard Vines, Calebs Integrity in Following the Lord Fully (1642); Anthony Burges, The Difficulty of and the Encouragements to a Reformation (1643).
- 31 Dictionary of National Biography, xx, p. 369.
- 32 W.C.R.O., Compton family papers, M1/167/6, 1083/2, f. 2.
- 33 The abuse of James Nalton by royalist soldiers was described in an anonymous "Letter out of Warwickshire", published with the pamphlet, The Proceedings at Banbury (1642), p. 8. For Anthony Burges, see Calamy, Nonconformists' Memorial, ed. Palmer, ii, p. 491.

- 34 Three Warwickshire ministers, William Cooke of Wroxall, James Nalton of Rugby and John Trapp of Stratford, were appointed chaplains to the parliamentary army in 1642.
- 35 Staunton and Bloxam, Notices of the Churches of Warwickshire (1844), i, pp. 148-149.
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- 37 Bodleian Library, minute book of the committee for plundered ministers, 1646-1647, Bodley MS 324, fos. 240v-241r.
- 38 A True and Perfect Relation of the First and Victorious Skirmish (1642), p. A3.
- 39 The ten ministers were Thomas Baker of Baxterley, William Clark of Brinklow, Andrew Collace of Napton, John Doughtie of Lapworth, Francis Holyoake of Southam, Thomas Holyoake of Birdingbury, Robert Kenrick of Burton Dassett, Edward Mansell of Stoneleigh, Henry Twitchet of Stratford and Henry Watkins of Sutton. A. G. Matthews, Walker Revised (2nd ed., Oxford 1988), pp. 362-367.
- 40 This list excludes ministers sequestered for negligence and immoral behaviour. Matthews, Walker Revised, pp. 362-367.

- 41 Two future royalists, the Earl of Northampton and Lord Dunsmore, supported the campaign against Laudian innovations in 1640-41. See section three for details.
- 42 Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, pp. 94-99. For Greville's attitude towards separatists, see Robert E. L. Strider, Robert Greville, Lord Brooke (Cambridge Mass. 1958), pp. 224-230.
- 43 Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, ed. W. Macray (1888), i, p. 309.
- 44 William Purefoy was one of the patrons of Richard Vines. William Combe enjoyed contacts with numerous godly ministers in south Warwickshire, including Thomas Dugard and Thomas Wilson of Stratford. See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 74, 77.
- 45 Lichfield Joint Record Office, episcopal visitation book, 1636, B/V/1/58, f. 29v.
- 46 The personal papers of Richard Newdigate and John Temple are examined in Chapter Four.
- 47 See F. L. Colville, Worthies of Warwickshire (1869), p. 237.
- 48 The expulsion of Samuel Clarke from Coventry is described in Chapter Seven.
- 49 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 119-120.

- 50 East Sussex Record Office, correspondence of the Temple and Busbridge families, Dunn MS 51/54.
- 51 W.C.R.O., DR(B)3/39, p. 166.
- 52 W.C.R.O., vestry order book, Holy Trinity, Coventry, DR581/61, fos. 70v-71r, 72r.
- 53 Quarter Sessions Indictments, p. 65.
- 54 The role of outsiders in determining the allegiance of Coventry in 1642 is described in Chapter Seven.
- 55 Richard Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae (1696), p. 45
- 56 Robert Greville, Lord Brooke, A Worthy Speech made by the Right Honourable the Lord Brooke (1642), pp. 3, 5.
- 57 The Proceedings at Banbury, p. 8.
- 58 Calamy, Nonconformists' Memorial, ed. Palmer, ii, p. 491.
- 59 Baxter, Reliquiae Baxterianae, p. 44.
- 60 John Pym was a guest at Warwick Castle in September 1635 and September 1636. On the latter occasion he was joined by Viscount Saye. See Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 74. For Brooke's

political connections before 1640, see Strider, Robert Greville, pp. 11-27.

- 61 See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 121-122.
- 62 In the 1630s Thomas Dugard was a regular visitor to Banbury, where he attended sermons by William Whateley and Robert Harris. He also heard preachers in Northamptonshire and Staffordshire. See Hughes, Warwickshire, pp. 65, 73-74.
- 63 Robert Harris was a lecturer at Stratford between 1629 and 1631, and later became family chaplain to the Lucys of Charlecote. John Ley was a regular visitor to Warwick, where he occasionally preached. Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, council book, 1628-1657, BRU2/3, pp. 14, 30, 51; Hughes, Warwickshire, p. 78.
- 64 Clarke, "Brief Narrative", in Eminent Persons, pp. 7-8.
- 65 Richard Vines, Calebs Integrity in Following the Lord Fully (1642); Anthony Burges, The Difficulty of and the Encouragements to a Reformation (1643).
- 66 Two Petitions, Petition to Lords, p. 5.
- 67 Burges, Difficulty of and Encouragements to a Reformation, p. 5.
- 68 Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, p. 17.

- 69 Ephraim Huitt, The Whole Prophecy of Daniel Explained (1643),  
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- 70 The attitude of the Puritan clergy towards persecution is  
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- 71 Harris, Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons, p.  
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- 72 Samuel Clarke, A Generall Martyrologie, "To the Christian  
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- 73 Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, pp. 44, 99.
- 74 James Nalton, Delay of Reformation Provoking Gods Further  
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- 77 *Ibid.*
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- 81 Public Record Office, letter from Nehemiah Wharton to George Williamson, 1642, SP16/491/138. George Dale's record as minister of Sowe is described in Chapter One.
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- 88 E.S.R.O., Dunn MS 51/54, p. 2.
- 89 P.R.O., SP16/491/138.

- 90 For a general discussion of the role of anti-popery on the parliamentary side, see Robin Clifton, "Fear of Popery", in Conrad Russell, ed. The Origins of the English Civil War (1973). Also Peter Lake, "Anti-Popery: The Structure of a Prejudice", in R. Cust and A. Hughes, eds., Conflict in Early Stuart England (1989).
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- 96 Clarke, Englands Covenant, p. 9.
- 97 B.C.R.L., collection of letters, MS 1098/111, Robert Knight to his brother, 1643.
- 98 Greville, Nature of Episcopacie, p. 61.



- 99 Harris, Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons, p. 28.
- 100 Richard Vines, The Impostures of Seducing Teachers Discovered (1644), p. 25; Samuel Clarke, A Mirrour or Looking Glasse, both for Saints and Sinners (1646), p. 65.
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- 109 Journals of the House of Lords, iv, p. 234.

- 110 Sir Francis Leigh, Lord Dunsmore, was the son of Sir Francis Leigh of Kings Newnham. In 1625 Sir Francis I bequeathed a gilt chalice to Kings Newnham parish church "for the more devout and reverende administration of the holy communion". W.C.R.O., will of Sir Francis Leigh, 1625, CR136/C1935.
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